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Love in Umbria

By LUCY HEALD



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LOVE IN UMBRIA



Love in Umbria

*A Drama of the First
Franciscans*

By LUCY HEALD, A.M.

CAMBRIDGE

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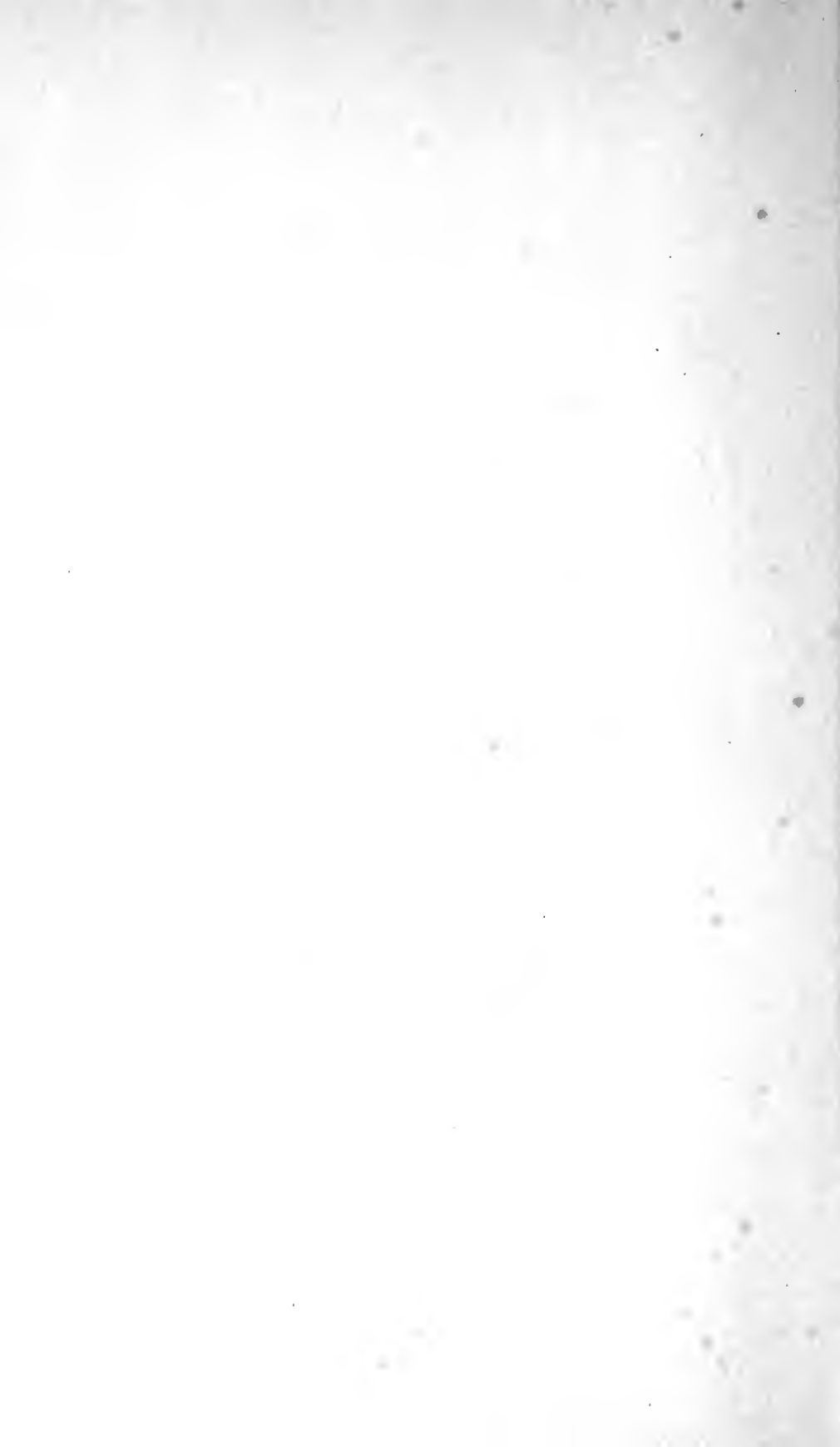
TO
S. A. B.,
E. M. de L.,
AND
H. P. H.



PREFACE

WASHINGTON's acquaintance with the Warringtons is not recorded in history. With such a precedent — *si parva licet componere magnis* — I do not hesitate to state that many incidents in the following pages cannot be verified by any authentic biography of or even legends concerning St. Francis of Assisi.

L. H.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

TRISTAN, CONTE DI SENSOLI }
VALENTE, *his brother* } *to be played by one actor*

VIVIANA

FELICE, *a gardener, her servant*

INNOCENZA, *a peasant girl of Assisi*

LUIGI, MARCHESE D'ALESSI, *brother to VIVIANA*

VIVIANA'S DUENNA

BIANCA }
EMILIA } *servants to the MARCHESE*
BEPPA }

GIACOMO, *servant to CONTE DI SENSOLI*

MADDALENA }
TESSA } *gossiping neighbors*

NICCOLO }
GUIDO } *loungers*

PIETRO, *a beggar*

GIOVANNI, *another beggar*

SOFIA, *a flower-seller*

GABRIELLA }
ANGIOLA } *peasant girls of Perugia*

viii D R A M A T I S P E R S O N Æ

MARIA, *Come from Assisi to trade*

*Bargainers, gossips, loungers, children in the square at
Perusia*

FATHER FRANCESCO, *the Little Poor Man*

BROTHER LEO

BROTHER PAOLO, *the little Boy-brother*

BROTHER JUNIPER, *A Cobbler, "the plaything of Jesu Christ"*

BROTHER GILES, *the Reasoner*

BROTHERS SIMON, MASSEO, THE SACRISTAN, *and other Brothers*

TWO LITTLE BOYS OF ASSISI

SISTER CLARE

SISTER INNOCENZA, *the youngest of the nuns, and other Sisters*

PROLOGUE. *Scene: a public square in Perusia*

ACT I. *Scene: the kitchen of the Portiuncula at Assisi*

ACT II. *Scene: the garden of the Villa d' Alessi*

ACT III. *Scene 1: a cross-roads in the fields near Assisi*

Scene 2: the garden at Saint Damian's

PROLOGUE

SCENE: *A public square in Perugia. A street runs through the square from left to right, centre. At right is seen the Villa d'Alessi, facing on the square. In centre, a fountain where women are washing clothes and filling jars with water. Other houses line the street that runs through the square and also an alley leading back from the front of the stage, centre. At left, front, a booth where flowers and fruit are sold. Venders, loungers, beggars, shoppers make the square a changing spectacle.*

Bianca (sorting the clothes at the fountain)

Emilia, it's bad luck you will bring to the Lady Viviana by your carelessness. Madonna protect her, for the signs are terrible! See how you've mixed the women's and children's clothes with the men's! Did you ever know that sign to fail to bring misfortune?

Emilia

My mistress laughs at signs. Only yesterday

I shivered to hear her mock at the fortune-teller for predicting sorrow.

Bianca

Did you ever know, I say, of misfortune's not coming when the women's and children's clothes get mixed with the men's?

Emilia (troubled)

There's but one thing I can do, Bianca. Those candles I was meaning to burn to keep some one faithful, I'll offer for my Lady Viviana instead!

Bianca

That would be wise.

(Enter from the left, Conte di Sensoli preceded by his servant, Giacomo, who clears the way. The Count walks with bent head and general appearance of abstraction. The loungers make way in surly fashion. Some children, whose play is interrupted, begin to cry. The Count is admitted by Beppo to the Villa d'Alessi.)

Tessa (on a roof-garden, to her neighbor, on a balcony across the alley.)

Signior Valente is a patient wooer.

Maddalena (on her balcony)

That Signior Valente in the pall-colored

garb? Not he! This Sir Pensieroso is the elder brother, as like Sir Allegro as a shadow is like the real image in the sun. This sombre one's the Count, and wonderfully rich, but who could marry a shadow!

Tessa

I marked the difference. The same features, only sallow-hued and glum. Not Signior Valente's stride or his smile, as if the thing he looked on was the thing he liked best.

Maddalena

That's the man precisely. — And his looks range everywhere.

Niccolo (a loungee)

It's a rare sight to see Conte di Sensoli in the streets. A year ago he was prominent enough in council. I've heard him speak in this very square, promising good laws and plenty to the poor. Now we are threatened with a corn famine, and what does he do to advise us? They say he will dole out gold when urged, but what's the value of gold when there's no corn to buy? Yet he called himself a "lover of Perugia."

Guido (another loungee)

A lover of Perugia! Curse him! His sleek varlet would have jostled me into the street if

I had not been braced. It's we folks that have no grand masters that feel the pinch most. This Felice, the Marchese's lazy gardener, is fat enough!

Tessa

I have thought it was time he went for the settlement. But it was the other brother I have seen.

Maddalena (as Tristan and the Marchese appear on the balcony)

We shall soon know what to think.

(They gesture to each other their surmises during the conversation between the Marchese and the Count.)

Marchese

Shall we talk here?

Tristan

The rest is briefly put.

In this respect I hold myself most happy,
That to the Lady's rank and loveliness
Her virtue can be comparable. I thank you,
That you are pleased, my Lord, to rate as worthy
The name of Countess that I offer her.

Marchese

The name Sensoli is a warrant, — further,
My sister is inclined to you.

Tristan

An honor
That I had not presumed or estimated.

Marchese

To be honest, Sir, one of your family
Seemed like to win her, — young Signior Valente,
Who will come wooing here weekdays and
Sundays,
Morning, noon, and night!

Tristan

A hot Perusian,
Forever in the saddle or on his knees
Before a lady or a shrine. The boy
Is dear to me, — but duty to my house
Constrains my marriage. He would fling away
His life for a gauntlet on his wedding morn.

Marchese (hesitating)

They are both young and blithe.

Tristan

Fear not for her,
Although she leaves the gallant for the recluse.
My pensive life among my books shall cast
No shade on her. Can I not value hope
And gaiety although I have it not?

Marchese

Youth is still yours. Why will you waste its zest

In self-appointed exile? We have missed you
In council-room and market-place.

Tristan (pointing to the crowd in the square)

Why struggle

To lift this inert mass?

Marchese

Let not your pique
At being foiled the first time hinder you
From future benefactions. Pardon me,
I was your prophet and you willed to fail me.

Tristan

Not wilfully but out of desperation.
Oh, I have had my dreams! I thought to right
The world. The glorious, idle dreams of youth!
But better men than I have failed, and Vice
Goes by unchallenged, and Holiness is reviled
And stoned by the rabble. I am done with the
world!

*(A beggar climbs up on the balcony, holding
out his hand.)*

Pietro (the beggar)

Alms, for the love of God! Only a penny!
(Whispering) Listen, you that call yourself the
lover
Of Perugia!

Tristan

Take your alms and be off again!

Pietro (whispering)

Listen. I know a scheme to aid the city
From threatened famine.

(Aloud) One penny more, good Signior !

Marchese

Your kinsman hath the zeal ; unite your wit,
That so Perugia's fortunes may be owed
To the name Sensoli.

Tristan

I tell you, I am done
With bickerings and shifts and bargainings
And counter-plots!

Pietro (whispering)

For the sake of Perugia, hear me!

Tristan (as he strikes down the beggar's band)
(To the Marchese) I owe no duty to my state
except

To keep myself untainted.

Marchese (watching Pietro as he clambers down)

That's a bold beggar.

He puts twopenny value on his neck !

(Looking down the street.)

My sister is approaching ; she's attended
By Signior Valente.

Tristan

Shall we sign the papers?

(They enter the house. A beggar approaches)

a monk in a brown robe who has been going from one to another exhorting them, and is now being teased by some little boys.)

Juniper (the monk)

Let be, let be, you little rogues!

Giovanni (the second beggar)

Alms for the love of the Cross you wear!

Juniper

Alas, I have nothing to give thee, dear Brother. The Brothers of my House will not leave anything lying around, for they say I would give everything away, and I am expressly forbidden to give any part of my habit away. But stay—I have thought of a scheme! If thou shouldst take my cloak off my back, that would not be giving it away!

(He leans over and the beggar pulls off the cloak.)

Guido

Do not rob him. He is a simple good fellow that knows nothing but cobbling.—What will you say to your Superior, good Brother?

Juniper

I'll say a good man took my cloak and ran off with it.

(He speeds Giovanni, who runs off. Mean-

while Viviana has entered, left, with her Duenna and Valente. He scatters the children by throwing pennies for which they scramble. He must bow right and left to acknowledge salutations.)

Maddalena

Now, then, do you see any difference?

Tessa

Else I should have a gourd's head on my shoulders! But look, Maddalena, the lady is ill-pleased or indifferent.

Maddalena

What can you argue from indifferent looks! This is baffling.

Viviana (stopping before the flower booth)

No camellias this morning? I would give five soldi for camellias for a shrine.

Sofia (the flower-seller)

There's not a camellia in Perugia this morning, Lady. But here are tube-roses. They say that tube-roses are like incense to the Madonna.

(Viviana buys the tube-roses and goes in with Valente and the Duenna. Enter, right, a flower-girl accompanied by a woman who carries a baby strapped upon her back.)

Innocenza (the flower-girl)

Let us go home. My basket will not be noticed here.

Sofia

My good girl, let me see your camellias ; I would give two soldi for camellias to deck a shrine. How much for this little bunch?

Innocenza

Two soldi.

Maria (her companion, nudging her)

Innocenza, that is the finest bunch you have. — Three soldi, she says.

Sofia

Holy Virgin ! Three soldi for camellias that are wanted to deck a shrine ! Would you rob the Lord Almighty himself?

Felice (approaching)

My mistress would give four soldi for camellias, as Sofia knows.

Maria

These came from Assisi and are very fine.

Felice

My mistress would give five soldi for camellias from Assisi.

Innocenza

A soldo for yourself, Sir.

Felice

Five is the least she would deign to give.
And she loves especially the golden asters that
bloom earliest in Assisi.

Innocenza (eagerly)

A few weeks more and they will be in bloom.

Felice

I know. Each spring I must search the coun-
tryside.

Sofia

My mistress likes tube-roses best. She
bought all mine this morning.

*Felice (turning his back on Sofia and drawing
Innocenza aside)*

How much richer is Assisi than Perugia in
golden asters and golden tresses! It enraptures
me to picture how golden earrings would set
off those tresses!

Maria (whispering to Innocenza)

He offers you gold, the bridegroom's gift!

*(Meanwhile Viviana and Valente have ap-
peared on the balcony.)*

Viviana

Why will you weary me with being importunate?
I am complaisant to your jesting always.
You know the mood that pleases.

Valente

I would teach you

What pleases me.

Viviana (turning from him)

The square is brisk to-day;

Trading and gossip;—you will feed the glut-
tons

With savory morsels.

Pietro (clambering up again)

Alms! (*Whispering.*) For the love of Perusia,
Listen this time.

Valente (gravely)

You may not ask me twice

In Perusia's name.

Pietro

Oh, now you are awakened!

You are nobler now with loveliness at your
side!—

Pardon, your worship, I never spake with
you

Before. 'Twas some ignoble noble spurned
me!

Valente (courteously)

Be brief. What is your claim?

Pietro

O gentle sir,

Believe me in despite of all my rags.
'T is my necessity that makes me keen.
A farmer of Foligno hath made known
To me how corn can be procured.

Valente (sharply)

The means?

Pietro

Your worship knows the long-time enmity,
Shrinking from war, Foligno entertains
Against our city.

Valente

Yes. What then?

Pietro

Last year

At planting time and harvest many men
Were drawn to war. Whereat Foligno mer-
chants,
Anticipating famine in the spring
For us, bought up the Umbrian corn and
now,
When we're in need, Foligno will not sell,
Pretending scarcity of their own crops.
He, my informant, being overheard,
Was flung in prison. I myself escaped.
To-night they burn the stores lest hated Perugia
Should come to buy!

Valente (rising)

We'll go a-marketing.

(They whisper together. Valente puts a chain about the beggar's neck.)

Viviana

Haggling over an alms? Here, Master Nimble,
The fee you'll need for the apothecary!

(He clambers down with difficulty and waving his hand to Signior Valente blows the whistle on the chain. There is at once a stir in the square. Armed men come running in, to whom the beggar communicates his news.)

Valente

My answer! I must have it now! My sword
Shall not be drawn again till thou hast blest it.
My answer!

Viviana

Sir, I lack the wit to guess
The answer till I've heard the question. Since
You seem in haste, I'd stay you not. Farewell.

(She extends her hand. Meanwhile the square has filled with soldiers. One leads a charger to the door of the Villa d'Alessi. Valente motions for his horse to be led beneath the balcony. He steps upon the parapet.)

Valente (calling)

Are there any hungry here?

The Crowd

I! I! My children!

Valente

Who 'll go a-marketing with me?

The Troop

Here, Captain!

*Valente (looking back with a swift, devoted gaze,
then leaping down)*

God and Saint Laurence for Perusia!

*Viviana (looking ruefully at her outstretched
hand)*

A gallant lover!

(The Duenna comes out.)

Duenna

What's all this broil about?

Viviana

Your hero's grown domestic, — gone to market,
He said.

Duenna (looking after the soldiers)

You let him go unanswered?

Viviana

Look

At this foolish hand outstretched for him to
kiss.

Duenna

I can make nothing of this. Where are your eyes?

Viviana

There never was a school-girl more in love
With soldier's glitterings than thou.

Duenna

We love

The soldier not that he goes forth to slay,
But haply to be slain. You are a child;
Do riches touch your heart?

Viviana (thoughtfully)

Who knows what touches

The heart?

Duenna

Dear child, I'll pray you may be happy.
(*She goes in. The Count comes out on the balcony. Viviana greets him with frank pleasure.*)

Felice (leading Innocenza to the balcony)

Mistress, here are fine camellias.

(*He climbs up a little way, holding out the basket, which Tristan takes.*)

Sofia

Folks of queer manners come out of Assisi.
Bold hussies and mad friars. We all know
Francesco Bernadone for a roisterer.

Innocenza (fiercely)

He is a holy saint!

*Tristan (returning the basket without taking
out any flowers, but putting a coin into
Felice's hand)*

They are all too pale or sickly sweet for thee.
A flower that's all a vivid gaiety,
Nor hides its crimson heart in paler petals,
Nor languishes upon its stem, but glances
In every breeze. A poppy in the grass!
(*To Innocenza*) Bring me red poppies and you
shall be rich.

Innocenza

The first red poppies shall be hers, your worship.

Viviana

Buy poor Sofia's flowers. They are hungry here,
And she loves Felice.

(*Tristan gives more money to Felice, point-
ing to Sofia. Felice does the errand with
a grimace.*)

See, your tube-roses
Are better than camellias for my shrine.

Tristan

It suits my lady's pleasure to be indulgent.
Why do you look so fondly on this scene?
Dwelling on some fair picture in the mind?

Viviana

Is it not bright and beautiful to see?
The little children earnest at their games ;
The idlers basking, gossips sedulous,
Grandmothers benevolent, the bargainers
Out complimenting one another ; then
A moment ere you came, the thrill and lift
Of brave, impetuous men ! Only you
Are calm and wiser ! (*With averted gaze.*) Lastly
you may see
The rueful, unregarded monk.

Tristan

The measure
Of my lady's charms I had not found ; — she's
grown
Philosophical. In that I may make claim
To teach you much.

Viviana

Why, Sir, doth it require
Philosophy to see what is plain, and love ?

Tristan

By your sweet blindness you may not discern
Greed and deception, sloth, the menace lurking
In beauty of age's ugliness. Ah, now
I have dimmed your vision more myself who
would

Cherish your gaiety, for I am sad!
 Forget those words and praise my simile!
 This brooch I wear to mind me of the child
 I was — I found this topaz hidden away
 In a secret drawer whose spring my prying hand
 Had chanced upon. Oh, wonder, for within
 Must burn a magic fire! It harmed me not,
 Yet it blazed fiercer than firelight!

Viviana

Silly child!

Quaint philosopher!

Tristan

Day after day
 I drew it, trembling, from its hiding-place,
 My breast. Some day, I said, it cannot fail
 To burn to ashes. So I true believed.

Viviana

The round-eyed rogue!

Tristan

But never the jewel failed
 To flash in the sun. And now I know my jewel,
 Because it is a jewel, must glow forever!
 Now for my simile —

Viviana (anticipating)

Philosophy

Came late with me. This gem, the mate of yours,

I bade my mother hoard till I was grown
And could wear it in a ring. All vanity!

Tristan (urgent)

Even as Lady Viviana's destined
To be the Child of Joy. Wouldst thou hear more
Of similes?

Viviana

Your rhetoric is skilful!

Juniper (demanding to be heard)

Dearly beloved, flee from the world and put
away sin! Render to others their due if you
would escape from Hell; follow the command-
ments of God to love God and your neighbor,
if ye would possess the kingdom of Heaven.
Dearly beloved, flee from the world.

Tristan

A sombre interruption. Yet the man
Kindles the fancy! Ecstasy in rags!
There may be matter in this frenzy worth
My study.

Viviana

As philosopher I'd rate you
Beneath the poet!

Tristan

Come, the simile.

(They go in together.)

Maddalena

She never listened so long to Signior Valente,
God keep him !

A Perusian (running in)

Why are you not all at the gate ? Our troop
is marching. Shall we speed them with our
prayers ?

The People in the Square

Yes, to the gate. Our deliverers !

(Soon the square is emptied and the people at windows and on balconies and roof-gardens have disappeared. Enter from the left a youth carrying a cage of turtle-doves. He looks about the empty square with disappointment. He sets the cage upon the counter and rests. You can hear the voice of a street-singer. Soon he appears, a brown-clad friar. As he comes down the alley he looks up at the houses, singing to them. The youth spies him and hastens with alacrity to greet a possible customer. The friar blocks the alley with his arm. You can see the phases of the interview ; astonishment, chagrin, disappointment, contrition, satisfaction on the part of the youth. He returns the way

he had come. The friar enters the square, bearing the bird-cage. He looks about the empty square, resuming his song. Then he passes out, singing, and as he goes, releasing the birds from the cage.)

The Friar

My heart's aflame with love!

My heart's aflame with love!

CURTAIN

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

TRISTAN, CONTE DI SENSOLI }
VALENTE, *his brother* } *to be played by one actor*

VIVIANA

FELICE, *a gardener, her servant*

INNOCENZA, *a peasant girl of Assisi*

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VIVIANA'S DUENNA

BIANCA }
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MADDALENA }
TESSA } *gossiping neighbors*

NICCOLO }
GUIDO } *loungers*

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GIOVANNI, *another beggar*

SOFIA, *a flower-seller*

GABRIELLA }
ANGIOLA } *peasant girls of Perugia*

xxxii D R A M A T I S P E R S O N Æ

MARIA, *Come from Assisi to trade*

*Bargainers, gossips, loungers, children in the square at
Perusia*

FATHER FRANCESCO, *the Little Poor Man*

BROTHER LEO

BROTHER PAOLO, *the little Boy-brother*

BROTHER JUNIPER, *A Cobbler, "the plaything of Jesu Christ"*

BROTHER GILES, *the Reasoner*

BROTHERS SIMON, MASSEO, THE SACRISTAN, *and other Brothers*

TWO LITTLE BOYS OF ASSISI

SISTER CLARE

SISTER INNOCENZA, *the youngest of the nuns, and other Sisters*

PROLOGUE. *Scene: a public square in Perusia*

ACT I. *Scene: the kitchen of the Portiuncula at Assisi*

ACT II. *Scene: the garden of the Villa d' Alessi*

ACT III. *Scene 1: a cross-roads in the fields near Assisi*

Scene 2: the garden at Saint Damian's

Love in Umbria

ACT I

SCENE: *Kitchen of the House of Portiuncula at Assisi.* BROTHER JUNIPER, *with great zeal and show of busyness, is building a great fire, left.* BROTHER PAOLO *is sweeping.* On a pallet, right, half reclines a sick man, TRISTAN, CONTE DI SENSOLI.

Juniper

THIS kitchen is the room of all the House
Wherein the Devil works mischief. Here I stay,
Wasting the time that I might spend in prayer
On things to tempt our lustful appetites.
I have bethought me how this grievous sin
May be avoided.

(Without some one knocks timidly. The Brothers cease their work and kneel, praying silently. The knock is repeated more boldly; then a third knock, impatient.)

Juniper (rising)

We should be prepared,
Having repeated thrice the Pater Noster,
To greet the stranger. — In the name of God,
Enter!

(He admits, rear, two little boys; one carrying chickens tied by the legs; the other laden with kettles swung over his shoulders as well as in his hands.)

Juniper

God save you, little friends! Ye come
Just on the hour. God shall reward you
both

For service greater than ye understand.
Hast thou no greeting, Brother Paolo?

Paolo (shyly)

The Lord give you His peace.

Elder Boy (staring at Paolo)

We may not stay.

It was forbid.

Juniper

Well spoken, little son.

I would not hinder thine obedience.
Another time. Which is the elder, thou?
Then take this silver bell into thy charge.
If trouble come to either, thou shalt find

The value of it. Fare ye well, my sons.

Fear God and obey your mother!

(They go out, reluctant, wondering. As they pass Paolo, the younger thrusts a handful of chestnuts into the Little Brother's hand.)

Younger Boy (to Elder)

Does he play

Like us?

Elder Boy

Hush, he must pray!

Younger Boy

What puts that shine

Into his eyes?

Elder Boy

Hush, mother says the angels

Speak in his ear! *(The door closes after them.)*

Paolo (glowing)

Oh, look! All these for me!

(To Tristan.) Oh, Sir, if thou couldst eat them—

Tristan

No, my child.

But let me see you feast. Your little cheek

Is not too round.—Good Brother, pray explain.

Do you prepare a royal banquet here?

Juniper

Hast thou not guessed my plan? I have arranged

4 L O V E I N U M B R I A

This morning to prepare abundant food
To last a fortnight. For I count it sin
If but one Brother stay away from prayers.
I went about and begged the food and pots.

Tristan

A noble task!

Juniper

But one thing now I lack,
An herb that groweth in the meadow near.
Brother Paolo shall tend thee whilst I go
To gather it. Hast need of anything?

Tristan (wearily)

Of nothing. I will call our little Brother
If there be need.

Juniper (bending over the sick man)

Still far too pale and wan,
Yet marvellously hast thou mended since
That sorry day I found thee on the ground,
Flung from thy horse. 'T was God's own blessed
hand
That led thee hither.

Tristan

So I should believe,
Dear Brother.

Juniper

Peace unto this House.

Tristan and Paolo

Farewell.

(As Juniper puts on his cloak, Paolo runs up to him, pulling at his cloak.)

Paolo

Dear Brother Juniper, be very careful !
Remember thou hast been forbidden to give
Any part of thy habit away. This cloak is ragged
And the air is chill to-day. Let no one take
Anything away from thee, or else the Guardian
Will chide !

Juniper

Fear not, my little Guardian !

(He goes out, rear. Tristan seeming to be asleep, Paolo roasts his chestnuts at the fire, singing softly.)

Paolo (singing)

Little Brother Fish,
Beware the wriggling worm !
The fisher too is hungry,
I saw his cruel hook.
I speak as thy brother,
Little Brother Fish.

Little Sister Ant,
Why such foolish haste ?

6 L O V E I N U M B R I A

Fear not for the morrow,
The Lord will provide !
I speak as thy brother,
 Little Sister Ant.

 Little Sister Bird,
Spread thy shining wings.
Fly for me from North to South,
From East to West, and make the
 Cross !

I love thee as thy brother,
 Little Sister Bird !

 (*Tristan stirs. Paolo runs to him.*)

Paolo

Oh, Sir, thou couldst have slept but for my
 song,
And I, thy nurse !

Tristan

 No, boy, I cannot sleep.
Sit here, our Little Brother-to-the-sick.
Come closer, so. Do you find happiness
Here in this House, and never long to play
With village children ?

Paolo

 Nay, I am happy here :
I work and pray and sing. Hast thou no work ?

Tristan

Yes, to be brain and will for a hundred oafs
Who earn their bread of me ; whereby more
beggars
Are born into the world.

Paolo

Our Father saith
Whoever benefits God's poor is blest
A thousand thousand fold.

Tristan

'T is only death
Can aid the poor.

Paolo

We all do pray for death—

Tristan

Ah, hush, my child—

Paolo

May I not speak ? I wish
That thou wouldst teach me how to hold thy
sword.

Dost thou wear it thus ? Our Little Father
saith

Some men may fight, but we are men of peace.
Look how it gleams !

Tristan

Aye, for the stains of blood

8 L O V E I N U M B R I A

Were cleansèd long ago. Men say the Count
Disdains to fight ; they dare not say he dares not.
This gleaming thing is symbol of revenge.
Your tender hands shall not be sullied.

Paolo

Nay,

I was 'ware of the blade.

Tristan

Come, put away the sword,
But ask whatever else you will.

Paolo

I wish

That I might touch this great golden jewel
Thou wearest on thy hand.

Tristan

Why, you shall wear it.

Paolo

Oh, Sir, how beautiful ! The Brothers say
Thou must be rich, and Brother Elias said,
“ Perchance he'll give some money to the
Order.”

Tristan

What said the others ?

Paolo

Brother Leo said,
“ Are we not named the Order of Poor Brothers ?

"I pray he'll give his heart unto the Order."
 "Amen," said Brother Juniper, and I
 And all the rest spake likewise. How much gold
 Didst thou have to give to buy this jewel?

Tristan

None.

It was a gift, exchanged.

Paolo

How thou must love

The giver !

Tristan

Golden as the gem and flashing.
 (*The bell rings for Sext. The murmur of the
 antiphons may be heard; the voice of Little
 Brother Paolo, shrill and sweet, rises
 above the other voices as they recite the
 Salutation to the Virtues.*)

Paolo and the Brothers (unseen)

Hail, Queen Wisdom! The Lord save thee
 with thy holy sister, pure Simplicity. O holy
 Lady Poverty, may the Lord save thee with
 thy holy sister Humility. O holy Lady Charity,
 may the Lord save thee with thy holy sister,
 Obedience. O all ye most holy virtues, may the
 Lord, from whom ye proceed, save you.

Amen.

10 L O V E I N U M B R I A

Paolo (rising from his knees)

Oh, take it back! I fingered it in my prayer.

'T is a great sin!

Tristan

No sin, you foolish boy —

Paolo

I will confess. Father Francesco knows
How I was tempted. Once he carved a vase
Of wood, and when he said the prayers for
Tierce,

He thought a moment of the vase. "Since
this,"

Quoth he, "hath power to stop the sacrifice
"Of praise that I was offering to the Lord,
"It shall be sacrificed." Gems are a snare,
And all beautiful things.

Tristan

Would you not see
The wonders I have seen : fine palaces
And armored knights and lovely little maids
Fairer than angels?

Paolo

Nay, what I have seen
Is yet more wonderful.

Tristan

How, starry eyes?

What hast thou seen, the which remembered
brings

That flush — the radiance of the acolyte
Bearing the sacred taper?

*Paolo (hesitating at first, but reassured by Tris-
tan's smile)*

On a night

When Father Francesco lay by me, I tied
My cord to his, because I wished to know
Whither he goes by night. For I had marked
How after Compline he doth lay him down ;
But at the midnight, whilst the others sleep,
He riseth up. So waking from a dream
Of him, I found the cord unloosed, and rose
And went in search of him, and in a field
I found him, rapt in prayer. I knelt beside,
Touching his cloak, and it was cold and dark.
(*In ecstasy*) But presently a marvellous light
from Heaven —

Oh, brighter than the sun — shone all about!
And in that glory I beheld our Lord
And Mary Mother and the blessed John
With a multitude of angels: and they spake
Unto my Father. Blinded by that light
I swooned and fell upon the ground, and there
He must have found me when the vision faded.

And next I felt the warmth of his own breast.

For then our Father lifted me

And bore me homeward tenderly :

Resting in his arms, asleep,

As doth the Shepherd with His sheep.

*Tristan (when at length the boy has remembered
his presence)*

Only the pure in heart shall see God.

The vision hath been hidden from my sight.

Paolo

Oh, Sir, thou art a noble gentleman!

'T is thou and Brother Juniper I love

After our Little Father. That is why

I grieve when thou art suffering and when

Thou chidest me, for I do ever try

To please thee.

Tristan

Child, the fault is mine. Thy dream

Was "yet more wonderful" than palaces

And knights and little maidens.

Paolo

It was true!

*(Enter Juniper, rear, with a bunch of herbs. His
cassock is ungirdled. Paolo inspects him anxiously.)*

Juniper (briskly)

All's well? Now, little one, thy task is done.

Haste to thy prayers.

Paolo

Oh, Brother, where's thy cord?
I almost know the Guardian will be angry!

Juniper

But who would call a cord a part of one's habit?
A poor man lacked a rope to lead his cow!

(*Paolo goes out, reluctant, right.*)

Tristan

I am persuaded — almost — to remain
Here with you always, so that I may learn
Simplicity from you, and charity.

Juniper

Ah, not from me! I am the worst of men!
But from the Little Poor Man. He can speak
So thou wouldst be persuaded to renounce
All worldly pleasures. When he shall return
All will be well!

(*Tristan falls asleep. Juniper puts all the
pots on the fire. He drops in eggs in their
shells and chickens with their feathers on.
The fire being fierce, he ties a plank to his
body and so leaps from pot to pot, skim-
ming the stew. Enter Brother Leo, right.
They greet each other silently for Juniper
signals that Tristan is asleep. Leo is
amazed at the many pots and the great*

fire. He lifts a lid and puts it down hastily, holding his nose.)

Leo

It is a wedding feast
Methinks thou art preparing.

Juniper

Thou shalt see!

Leo

Our invalid, is he to have his share?

Juniper

Nay, 't is too rich for him; but here's fresh milk.
(*Enter, right, Brother Simon. He too marvels at the cooking, making signs of amazement to Leo.*)

Juniper

The stew is cooked. Now I will ring the bell.

(*When he has rung the bell, many of the Brothers pass, from rear to right, through the kitchen to the refectory. Juniper carries in one of the pots and is heard crying*)

Juniper

Eat well and then to prayers. No one need think
Of cooking for a fortnight.

Leo (hastily)

I will stay

To tend this gentleman.

Simon (hurrying away, rear)

And I must go

To guard the altar that the Sacristan
May eat, which Brother Juniper hath done
This morning.

*(Leo feeds Tristan, who has been roused by
the bell.)*

Leo

Milk is better food for thee.

*(Presently the Sacristan hurries through the
kitchen to the refectory.)*

Sacristan (muttering)

Never again shall Brother Juniper
Be left on guard! Two silver bells are gone,
Torn from the altar cloth; and one, I know,
Given to a beggar woman!

Tristan (to Leo)

I could tell

To whom the other one was given.

Leo

I fear

Dear Brother Juniper must suffer for this;
But he taketh joy in suffering.

Tristan

Such joy

Is all you know, who dwell within this House.

And yet you bear you like to men that find
The secret of joy.

Leo

Our Father taught us how
To find the perfect joy.

Tristan

Then, in God's name,
I pray you tell me how.

Leo

Right willingly.

Whenas our Little Father and his son
Were journeying from Perusia in winter
Unto Saint Mary's, and were sore distressed
From cold and rain and hunger; then said he:
"O Brother Leo, little lamb, wouldst know
"Wherein is perfect joy?" "Right gladly,
Father."

"If haply when we reach Saint Mary's door,
"The porter cry in anger, 'Get you gone.
"Ye be two rogues!' and when we knock
again,

"He rush upon us with a knotty stick;
"Then if we bear such slander and abuse
"Right patiently, nay, even with delight,
"From thinking on the wounds of Jesu Christ,
"Therein is perfect joy!"

Tristan

Alas for me!

I am unworthy. In my heart I know
I would have seized that stick and beaten him
With all the knots thereof!

Leo

I pray thy soul

May be redeemed from such unrighteousness.
Canst thou instruct me how to find a joy
Intenser?

Tristan

Each man's is superlative

To him.

Leo (doubtfully)

And thine?

Tristan

I shine but by reflection.

Leo

The Count Sensoli's name shineth in Umbria
By its own lustre.

Tristan (with a shrug)

You have lived in the world,
You know how soon a man perforce exhausts
The adventures of our life: love, war, domin-
ion;
Recoiling on the world of thought.

Leo

Aspiring

To the world of spirit.

Tristan

If you name it so.

Leo

Dominion tempted thee?

Tristan

Must I be taught

A second time the market price of honor?

Leo

And war hath sickened thee?

Tristan

Two ravening hosts

Each claiming God for General!

Leo

One thing

Remaineth—art thou free from passion's fetters?

Tristan (laying one hand over the other)

I owe a duty to my house—moreover,

I would not tarnish her most perfect joy.

Think you to hoard it all? And as for me,

'Tis sweet to own a jewel always flashing—

Leo

Gems are a snare!

Tristan

— Whene'er I have the will
To gloat on it. (*His hands fall apart.*)

Leo

Brother, what of her soul?
Yet thou wouldst tarnish that?

Tristan

Pardon me, Sir,
Your zeal is indiscreet.

Leo

Discretion is
Anathema unto the Brothers Minor.
But I forget thy weak estate. 'Tis prayer
Thou needest rather than monition. Rest
And be content. Wilt thou not drink again?

(*Tristan takes the cup again from Leo.*

*Brothers Ruffino and Masseo pass
through the kitchen, from right to rear.*)

Masseo

Eggs in their shells and fowls unplucked!
Didst see

The anger of the Guardian? Quoth he,
"There is no pig in all the land of Rome
"So famished as to eat this stew!"

Ruffino

Dear fool,
This is his day of trouble:

Tristan (to Leo)

How is this?

Leo

Didst thou not mark how he prepared the stew?

Tristan

I was asleep.

Leo

'T was even as they said.

Tristan

Dear blessed fool ! 'T would be a noble task,
He thought.

Leo

In truth his aim is always noble.

Tristan

Now, tell me, Brother Leo, in good faith,
Did you fast right willingly?

Leo

Right willingly.

*(They check their laughter as Juniper enters,
very dejected; attended by Paolo, who
watches him wistfully.)*

Leo

He cometh, sad of look. I will depart,
For he would be alone. To-morrow I
Am sent unto Perusia and will bear
A message to thy kinsman of thy gain
In strength and ease.

Tristan

I thank you, Brother Leo.

(*Leo goes out, right, without speaking to Juniper. The latter seats himself in a corner and begins to mix a mess of flour, assisted by Paolo, who is eager to help.*)

Tristan

Dear Brother, do not look so sad.

Juniper

Alas !

I am the worst of men ! One was condemned
To lose his eyes, another to be hanged
For evil deeds ; far more do I deserve
For wasting many of the useful things
Of God and of the Order.

Paolo

Say not so !

Dost not remember what our Father said ?

“I need a forest of such Junipers !”

Juniper

Dear lamb !

Paolo

’T is true ! He spake before us all.

(*Enter the Guardian.*)

Guardian

How farest thou to-day, good sir ?

Tristan

Right well.

I lack not with such care. I thought to rise
To-day — I would not tax your kindness
more.

Guardian

Nay, Sir, such haste were dangerous. Accept
Our humble care, I pray.

(*Juniper kneels before Guardian, offering the
bowl of pottage.*)

Juniper

O Guardian,

When thou reproachedst me, thou didst shout
so loud

That thou wert hoarse; remarking which I made
This pottage, excellent for swollen throats.

I pray thee, taste.

Guardian

What now, O foolish one?

Dost think to offer me another dish?

How many times hast thou deserved reproach
To-day? Thy cord is lost, the altar robbed
Of silver bells, another waste of food!

Paolo (loudly to Tristan)

As soon as Father Francis comes, he'll grieve
That Poor Men trim the altar with such gauds!

Juniper

I thank thee for these words, O Guardian.
 Reproach is sweet. But eat thy pottage, pray,
 For it will ease thy throat : 't was made for thee.

(Guardian refuses by an angry gesture.)

Then if thou wilt not, I'll refresh myself
 For I am faint.

*(He begins to eat the pottage. The Guardian
 marvels at the many pots on the dead fire.)*

Guardian

Oh, what unprofitable
 And foolish work ! Yet was he edified
 And thought to serve us. Now how meek his
 look,
 His face all red from toiling ! Brother dear,
 Since thou wouldst have it so, we two will
 eat

Together. *(He sits down by Juniper.)*

Juniper (when they have finished)

Art refreshed ?

Guardian

Aye, of a truth,
 By thy devotion am I more refreshed
 Than by the food. Thy penance shall be light.

Juniper

I pray thee, make it hard, O Guardian !

Guardian

If haply that the Father do return
To-night, thou shalt confess thy fault to him.

(*Guardian goes out, right.*)

Juniper

Oh, Sir, he saith the Father may return
To-night! Then shall my heart be comforted
And all this House shall thankfully rejoice.
He too hath known reproach and shame and
sin,

And he is ever mindful of our pain.

Tristan

The man you term "The Father," is not he
Son of the merchant Bernadone? One
Scorned by his father, driven from his home,
Men say?

Juniper

'Tis true. Rejected and despised
Even as One other.

Tristan

But his youth
Was sinful.

Juniper

Dissolute and idle; first
In wicked daring of Assisi's knights.
Ah, he whom thou shalt see is bent and worn!

His face is pinched, yet lovely to our eyes.
A face that children smile at ; all the birds
Answer his call ; even the beasts of the field
Fawn at his feet, begging for his caress.

Tristan

But what have I to do with such as he?

Juniper

He giveth hope to all that are in sin.

"None need despair," quoth he, "since I have
turned

"From sins so grievous."

Tristan

He would count my sin
Of doubt most grievous.

Juniper

Hark thou, friend, it is
The Devil prompts these doubts !

(Enter Brother Giles, right)

Here cometh one
That reasons shrewdly. Tell thy doubt to him,
That he may cast it out.

Tristan

Then, Brother Giles,
In all your reasoning, have you found the
clue
Out of the maze?

Giles

Is it not written plain?

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy
heart —”

Tristan

Hear me !

No man's blood is on my hands,

No man's goods have I robbed,

Nor broken faith with man or maid !

You thought me a knave afraid to die?

Giles

Not so,

Perchance the Pharisee.

Tristan

Believe me, no.

Perplexed rather than proud. This world's a
maze

Wherein I lose myself.

Giles

There is a path,

'T is narrow, yea, but straight ; obedience

Doth lead unto all good ; the road to sin

Is disobedience. For if a Brother

Have given another promise to obey,

And it should hap, that whilst an angel spake

With him, the Brother should be summoned,
then

He ought to run to do obedience,
 Leaving the angel. Like unto an ox
 That boweth low beneath the yoke and thus
 Tilleth the furrows straight ; in selfsame wise
 The true Religious doth obey ; unyoked,
 The ox would wander wide and so the fields
 Be barren and untilled.

Tristan

I could not bow
 Beneath a yoke of obedience !

Juniper

Blast this pride,

Lord Jesu, bend his stubborn heart till he
 Shall bow beneath the yoke !

Tristan

I cannot, nay,

I will not !

Juniper

Struggle no more, my brother. God
 Will send thee victory in His own time.

Be quiet now and sleep. Be not afraid.

God is thy guard, so if the tempter knock,

Safe in thy castle thou canst make reply,

“ Begone ! the fortress is already ta’en,

“ And no more folk may enter here within ! ”

Tristan (fretfully)

Take off this velvet cloak. It burdens me.

Juniper

But none were dangerous.

(He takes a cloak from a peg.)

Spread over him

The Robe of Poverty !

Tristan (smiling, unresisting)

That being poor

In person, therefore God will grant me grace

To be poor in spirit ?

Giles (coldly)

We will pray to God

To work that miracle. And let me warn thee,

Who wears this robe, puts it not lightly on.

(Fervently) For knowest thou not how it was
consecrated ?

One was there in this evil land of Rome

Who yearned to bear in his own flesh the
pains

Of bleeding Christ. And when he stood alone,

Reviled, stoned, shivering in the market-place,

Out from the church-door came the Man of

God,

Had pity and wrapped this robe about him.

We

Whom he hath chosen have a fair ensample,

For God hath sent His own Poor Little One

To be the light of Umbria ! Yea, I
 Will prophesy — this city set on a hill,
 Assisi, light, shall justify its name ;
 This hut become a shrine for far-off pilgrims ;
 And our mean selves remembered since he
 loved us,
 Francesco, Little Poor Man !

Tristan

 Strange is his sway,
 For I have pondered much the lives of men,
 marvelled at many, loved a few, but none
 Compelled me !

Paolo

 Wilt thou stay and be my brother ?
 Our Father comes to-night.

Tristan (pushing the boy aside gently)

 You have my love
 And gratitude as kindly hosts, but ask
 No more. I am aweary.

Juniper

 Little one,
 Another bundle of fagots on the fire,
 And then we 'll leave our brother to his rest.

Paolo

But look ! What gleams here in the coals,
 brighter

30 L O V E I N U M B R I A

Than firelight? 'Tis my lord's great golden
jewel

He wears upon his hand. Oh, pity!

Giles

Beware!

The jewel will not burn, but thy soft fingers
Would smart.

Tristan

The careless child was playing with it.

Paolo

Oh, Sir, I gave it back! It spoiled my prayer!

Giles

My Lord, it must have rolled away unfelt.
Thy hand is wasted.—To-morrow, little brother,
Thou'lt sweep it from the ashes.

Juniper

Oh, to think

How many poor that bauble would supply
With food and raiment!

Paolo

But he loves the giver.

(*He embraces Tristan timidly.*)

I thank thee for thy scolding, it was sweet!

(*Tristan returns the caress, smiling.*)

Juniper

God give thee peace!

Giles (as the three Brothers go out)

Urge him no more. A dreamer
Who hath no kin with Poor Men. He is dainty,
And being sick, mistakes for piety
His humor.

Juniper

Dare we deny one penitent?

(They go out)

*(The room has grown dim. The fire burns
fitfully. A shaft of moonlight falls across
the bed. Tristan stirs restlessly.)*

Tristan

So all my life were plain before me — prayer,
Fasting, and labor, with a quiet heart ;
And over common things a poetry
Like moonlight silvering a dusty road.
What hath the world vouchsafed that I should
shrink

To part therefrom? Riches, estate? But they
Afford more leisure for that contemplation,
The malady of ease! Who of my peers
Delights me more than this quaint cobbler
fellow?

Ah, they are wise, these simple folk that choose
The way of peace! How dim the past has
grown,

As if my life began within this House.
 Darkly I see Perugia's towers, my kindred,
 Dim save one vision burning on mine eyes,
 Her face! Those eyes alight and lips aflame
 And signal of my coming in her cheeks.
 A poppy glowing through the grass — she said,
 Being urged, that name pleased most. And is
 it nature

The poppy should take on the lily's hue?
 Or bridal raiment change to this dull garb?
 The Virgin bride of Christ! — Forgive me, Love,
 Thy jewel in the soot!

*(He strives to reach it, but falls back weakly.
 Without, some one is approaching, singing
 with poignant sweetness.)*

The Voice

My heart's aflame with love!
 My heart's aflame with love!
 My heart's aflame with love!

Tristan (curious, thrilled)

Who mocks them here?

The Voice

I wed a bridegroom new,
 The little lamb of love.
 When on the ring he drew
 He wounded me to prove

My heart can break in two.

Now I in prison move.

Now He hath conquered me,

All enmity doth cease

And love in verity

Attends upon our peace.

'Tis Christ enamours me.

I am mighty through His grace.

My heart shall faithful be

To Christ who comforts me.

My heart's aflame with love!

Tristan (sinking back)

"Aflame with love!" 'Tis I who have been
mocked!

(Enter, rear, through the moonlight a stranger in the habit of the Brothers Minor. The cowl hides his face. He bears in his arms a wounded hare. He moves softly to the pallet and bends over Tristan, questioning: then lifts the cloak, revealing the rich garments beneath. Believing Tristan to be asleep, he replaces the cloak gently. Then he makes a bed of straw by the fire for the hare.)

The Stranger (fondling the hare)

Little Brother, why didst thou let thyself be
caught

34 LOVE IN UMBRIA

In the cruel trap? I have delivered thee
And thou shalt be at ease. Be quiet now,
Fluttering heart! Thy brother holds thee safe.
(He sings softly as he lays the hare upon its bed)

My heart's aflame with love!

My heart's aflame with love!

My heart's aflame with love!

Tristan (roused, watching the Stranger idly)

Ah, Tristan, Count Sensoli, can it be
Thou wouldst endure to wear such dingy garb,
Be shrunk to such mean stature, wear that look
Of humble poverty?

*(As the Stranger kneels, the cowl falls from
his face; and the fire, blazing suddenly,
illuminates the beauty of the Little Poor
Man.)*

Ah, God, the face!

Who art thou?

*(Tristan staggers from his couch. Francesco
springs to support him, greeting him with
a kiss.)*

Francesco

Poor Little One of Jesu Christ,
His Shepherd. Welcome, brother little sheep!

CURTAIN

ACT II

(LADY VIVIANA and her duenna are walking in the garden. FELICE, the gardener, approaches with a bouquet of golden asters for his mistress. INNOCENZA is waiting bashfully at the gate.)

Duenna

WHY are you not content? I've heard you
praise

This garden, call it "Joy in Quietude,"

"Dream o' the Heart," — more names than I
remember ;

Yet now it irks you.

Viviana

I'll not be content

With terraced lawns and cypress shade and urns
Of cactus, whilst the fields are pied with flowers.
Look where that line of white doth cut the green
Of corn-fields ! 'T is acacia making sweet
The highway to Assisi. Every hedge
Is twined with honeysuckle ; cyclamen,

36 L O V E I N U M B R I A

Campanula swinging its bells, pale clematis,
Rosemary, violets perfume every hedge.

(*Noticing Felice.*) Ah, lad, thou knowest what

I love! My flower

That with the nightingale doth bring in May.

Where didst thou gather them?

Felice

It was not I —

Viviana

'T is not thy gift?

Felice

Dear lady, I told her how

I bring thee every May the earliest blooms.

She'll watch too for the earliest poppies.

Viviana

Then

I know who found these.

Felice

She's to be my bride.

Viviana

Thy bride! Hear, Madam, this boy I'm wont
to tease

To blushes — how the olive glows — this boy
Would have a wife!

Duenna

Most foolish!

Viviana

Nay, secure !

For all their love is hoarded for each other
 Since first he sighed to the moon, since first she
 blushed
 To her glass.

Felice

My Innocenza bade me say
 She prayeth every night that joy will come
 Unto the Lady Viviana.

Viviana

Tell her

To burn her candles for another wish.
 I have no lack of joy. I'll pray for her.
 But was she grown ?

Felice (pointing to Innocenza)

Look again !

Viviana

Fetch her hither !

(*Felice runs to fetch Innocenza. They approach their mistress hand in hand, waiting for her to notice them. Viviana has put some of the asters in her hair.*)

Duenna

A child would love their gold, but why shouldst
 thou
 Cherish the weeds ?

Viviana

For that I love the gold

As children do.

Duenna

A taste more delicate

Becometh thee.

Viviana

Is it unmaidenly

Preferring gold to lead, and life to death?

Duenna

I beg thee guard thy tongue, dear Viviana;

I never spoke such words.

Viviana

Last night we paced

The terrace whilst the nightingale complained

To the stars. And when I cried, "Ah, me! to thrill

"With the lark in the fields at dawn!" I heard

thy sigh.

Despair not, Madam, 't is this fault of mine

For which Tristan doth love me. "Like my

jewel,

(*fingering her brooch*) "Thou must forever

gleam." Then I replied —

Pray stop thine ears, dear Madam, for my tongue

I will not — "Ever I shall flash in the sun.

'T is thou

“Who art my sun!” — Oh, I can guess your thought —

My sun’s oft-times obscured! I am the breeze
That clears the sullen clouds before my lord,
The Sun!

Duenna

I cannot stop all ears that hear thee.
(*To Felice.*) Poppet! She’s but a child for thee
to tend

And thou needst mother more than wife. What
skill

Hath she in housewife duties?

Felice

All the ways

To keep my house — to bake, to sew —

Duenna

Speak, girl.

Innocenza (with sudden boldness)

Madam, my mother taught me how to serve
My husband, how to keep him warm and fed,
Obey him, love him —

Duenna

Spoken well. Too young
But promising. Now keep thy kettles bright,
Thy linen fresh, never forget thy prayers.

(*She gives Innocenza a coin.*)

Felice

Our thanks, sweet lady.

Innocenza

The Virgin bless thee, Madam.

(The Duenna crosses to the other side of the garden.)

Viviana

Where didst thou pluck this flower? A violet
grown

In Perugia's meadows?

Felice

In Assisi, my lady.

Viviana

Assisi? She can tell me, then — My child,
Come hither. Felice, away. We two will talk
Together, we women. 'T is not for thee to hear.

*(Felice returns to his task of clipping the
hedges. Viviana seats herself upon a mar-
ble bench. Innocenza stands before her.)*

Thou art Assisi born? And dost thou know
That strange community of friars that call
Themselves the Brothers Minor?

Innocenza

Yes, my lady.

Viviana

"Their Little Portion," is it rude and bare?
And would one suffer there in sickness?

Innocenza

Rude

And bare their lodging is, but merciful
And tender are the Brothers unto all
That suffer, be it pain or sin.

Viviana

There's one

Lies there in pain whom I would tend. Ah, me !
There winds the road ! Were it a thousand miles,
He could be no further from me.

Innocenza

Do not grieve.

The Little Father with his blessed hands
Perchance doth tend him.

Viviana

The Little Father?

Innocenza

He

We called Francesco Bernadone once.

Viviana

Tell me of him.

Innocenza

My mother served his mother,
Lady Pica. When I was a child he gave
Me toys. To me he was a Prince, and all
Assisi flattered him. But now, — ah, lady,

He is a saint of God ! Men say he bears
 The wounds of God in his own flesh. Myself
 Have seen a wonder. Once when we had roamed
 In the fields, returning, I by chance espied
 The Little Poor Man, so I lingered last
 To win his smile. And then my heart stood still,
 For after him there crept a horrid wolf.
 Ere I could scream, he turned and said, "Fare-
 well,
 "My Brother," and the wolf went on his way.

Viviana

A wonder truly, or the wolf was fed
 Till satisfied. Methinks I can recall
 Tales of youth that left a life of ease
 And mirth for poverty. To me 't is dark
 Why men should think God can be praised
 alone
 By groans. Dost hear the chaffinch chaunting
 there
 In the mimosa ? He is praising God
 With blithesome voice that soundeth sweet to
 Him
 As the nightingale's lament. This world's for
 Joy,
 Beauty, Romance : for lovers' amorous sighs
 As well as prayers. What thinkest thou, Inno-
 cenza ?

Innocenza

Even so, my lady.

Viviana

Loose that yellow tress.

Thy hair will match a ribbon I will give thee.
'Tis brighter even than mine. For shame to
play
The lady !

Innocenza

All my parents' kin are brown.
It shameth them that I should have such hair.
But Felice likes it.

Viviana

Aye, he doth, I 'll warrant.

Innocenza

He wrote a song about my yellow hair.
That 's what he 's singing — made upon the day
He saw me first. I wore this cowslip gown.

Viviana

(*Aside*) Not faded yet ! — Who could not be a
poet
With such a gown to rhyme about ? We 'll lis-
ten.

(*Felice can be heard singing.*)

Whene'er she combs her tresses,
Veil that 's spun of foam and sun

Felice

Pardon,

My lady, Innocenza is the song —
I made the words and tune.

Viviana

Incomparable

Then I must rank your poesie!

Innocenza

Thou dolt,

To thy work!

Felice

Pardon again, my lady. Try me
'Gainst all the maiden rhymers of the town
And I will warrant to outdo them all.

Viviana

Then bring them in. I warn thee I am stern
In judging rhymes.

*(Felice runs to the house and calls beneath
the window.)*

Felice

Emilia, Bianca!

(He runs to the gate and calls.)

Sofia, Gabriella, Angiola!

(Two heads appear at the window.)

Come out and try your skill with me at rhyming.
Our mistress doth command it.

Bianca

We're obedient.

(They hurry out. Gabriella, Angiola, and Sofia appear at the gate.)

Sofia

What's all this chattering about?

Emilia

Come, girls,

We'll bring the blushes to Felice's cheeks!

(They whisper together. Felice slings a guitar over his shoulder.)

Felice

Who's ready?

Emilia (stepping forward)

Sharpen your wits, Sir!

(They begin to dance side by side, Felice playing an accompaniment to her song.)

Emilia (singing with mock chagrin)

Felice, lovely lad,

Thy wooing makes Perusian maidens sad!

(Felice, still dancing and playing, selects a palm leaf and casts it at Emilia's feet.)

Felice (singing)

Flower o' the palm!

Familiar beauties leave me cold and calm,

But strange delights have strangest power to charm.

Viviana

Well begun!

Gabriella (waving her handkerchief to Beppo, who has appeared in the doorway, and taking Emilia's place beside Felice)

The calf would plough, the fledgling fly,
Since young Felice goes a-wooing by!

(Beppo claps his hands.)

Innocenza

Now, then, Felice, bestir thyself!

(He selects a stalk of aloe and presents it to Gabriella.)

Felice (singing)

Flower of the aloe!

Alas, how age can turn fair maidens sallow!

Yet youth must learn old age to fear and hallow!

Beppo (to Gabriella)

Yield now!

(Felice throws a wreath of roses around Innocenza's neck.)

Felice (singing)

Flower o' the rose!

In praising thee, hark how my music flows!

You listen and the crimson deeper grows!

Viviana

You approach a climax!

(Bianca takes her turn.)

Bianca (singing)

Felice, worthy is thy pride!

With kisses we will welcome home thy bride!

Viviana

That 's the sweetest poesie I have yet heard!

(*Felice selects for her a bouquet of mignon-
ette.*)

Felice (singing)

Flower o' the mignonette!

Bianca's beauty keeps me quivering yet,

Though Innocenza bids me to forget!

Viviana

A trifle overdone, Innocenza?

Innocenza

I am no judge of rhymes, sweet lady!

(*Sofia comes forward.*)

Sofia (singing spitefully)

Since vain you frayed your shoes before my
garden-door,

You seek new paths, new beauties to adore.

Soon you'll be barefoot, so one pang the
more!

(*Felice picks a squash vine and throws it
about her neck.*)

Felice (singing)

Flower o' the squash!

Some lips speak wisdom, others only bosh!

I choose to kiss the crimson cheeks that wash!

(All the other girls cry out exultantly.)

Viviana

What skilful jesting! There you were hard
pressed, Felice!

Sofia (going away)

I've no more time to waste. Trade is good
to-day.

Felice

One more song, girls!

*(They form a ring about Viviana. Felice,
singing, as they all throw before her
branches of hawthorn which Felice has
broken.)*

Flower o' the thorn!

For my poor rhymes our mistress hides her
scorn.

Fair as the starlight, fairer than the morn!

Innocenza (kneeling)

Flower o' the golden star,

Mary, send healing out of Heaven afar!

*(Beppo, who had re-entered the house after
Gabriella's song, now reappears.)*

Beppo

Signior Valente waits within. He seeks
My master.

Viviana

Signior Valente here? What news?
Thou hast not dared to come without a mes-
sage!

Beppo

The Count Sensoli is restored.

Viviana (to Duenna who has been looking on)

Good Madam,
Thou hearest? — Say the master's gone, I know
Not where. Conduct Signior Valente hither.
Children, away with you! (*To Angiola*) I'll
hear thy song

Another day, and will award the prize.
And thou shalt have thy ribbon, Innocenza.
But now away with you.

*(They withdraw, Bianca and Emilia to the
house, Angiola, Sofia, and Gabriella to
the square, and Felice and Innocenza to
the upper terrace, where Felice resumes his
work.)*

Beppo (returning)

Signior Valente
Entreats thy pardon, but he may not stay
Till he hath found Marchese d' Alessi.

Viviana

Sirrah,

Conduct him hither!

Beppo

Aye, my lady.

Viviana

So

That lean-faced friar spoke truth. But 't was
twelve days

Ago he came, twelve lagging days without
A message from him! — Madam, 't is no marvel
Messer Valente falters. You remember
How last he figured before me? Here was my
hand

Awaiting his farewell. Before the act
The shouts insisted. Then he wrenched his
sword —

“God and Saint Laurence for Perugia!”

And he was gone!

Duenna

Would you have stayed him?

Valente (entering)

Ladies,

Your servant greets you.

Duenna (giving her hand)

Welcome, Signior.

Viviana

Hail,

O conqueror!

Valente (sombrely)

God guard thee, dearest lady.

Viviana

And thee, Sir Long Face. What I thought to
hear

Was "Hail, Conqueror of all hearts." Such
speech

Was wont to become you better. Drooping
plume

And trailing colors? Thou dost wear the front
Of the vanquished! Thou, the Champion of
the Corn!

Have we not greeted you with laurelled pomp
But yesterday? To-day you sulk. Nay, this
Is grief! Tristan! You have deceived me!

Valente

Nay,

He is restored. I swear it by the mass!

Viviana

When have you seen him? Tell me, is he
wasted?

Valente

He was asleep —

Viviana

Then, why could you not stay
Till he should wake?

Valente

I can return anon —

Before the summons comes again to war.
For marketing hath grown a dangerous trade.
My brother's letter I read in my saddle. I
spurred

My horse and never stayed until I reached
The House of Portiuncula. Be assured
It is well with him !

Duenna

Fie on those foolish cheeks !

Viviana

I'll see the letter.

Valente

Nay, I have it not. —

Viviana

Thou stupid ! What message hath he sent ?

Valente

He sent —

His blessing.

Viviana

Oh, you never were in love !

Is this the hero all Perugia's maids
Adore ? Pray, do you wear such doleful looks
Before my Lady Laura or Lady Tessa
Or Maddalena on her balcony ?

Valente

They
 Heed not my frowns nor I their mirth : but
 only
 My Lady Viviana.

Viviana

Now at last
 I know thee for Valente. How was it
 I could deny the soldier for the scholar?

Valente (mirthlessly)

'T is plain —

Viviana

Ah, true ! But come, sit here with me
 And talk of him. — Canst bear to listen,
 Madam ?

*(Enter Marchese, left.)**Marchese*

You here ? O God in Heaven, curse thou the
 name
 Sensoli here and in Hell forever — Why
 Am I come too late ? I should have been the
 first
 To tell thee. Could my body shield the blow,
 My life for thine !

Viviana

Tristan ?

Marchese

Behold your work,
Assassin, accomplice! Her cheeks will be no
whiter
In her coffin!

Valente

Tristan is alive! 'T is thou
Hast killed her! I could tell her nothing.

Duenna

Child,
He is alive! Dost hear, my darling?

Marchese

Dearest,
All that I have is thine. Thou shalt be mis-
tress

Here always. But there are braver men and
truer

Who love thee. Spurn his memory!

Viviana

The truth!
Will no one tell me?

Valente

I must tell thee. God
Instruct me how to speak!— My brother
Tristan,
Having renounced all riches and rank and one

56 L O V E I N U M B R I A

Dearer than life, to save our souls with his,
Hath taken the unalterable vows of a Brother
Minor !

Duenna

Oh, Mary, spare this child ! Smite me for her !

Valente

Assassin ! The word was true !

Marchese

To save his soul ?

Nay, to be damned to everlasting hate !
The market-place is ringing with the scandal !
Valente, we were friends before. And now —

Valente

'T is ended now ? Be it so. There will be time
To talk of that henceforth. She needs us now.

Marchese

My brave girl !

Duenna

I 'd rather see her tears.

Viviana

The letter !

Valente

Here. Shall I read it thee ?

Hear how he loves thee ; written in agony.

(*Reading*) " You to whom I write now bear
alone the name Sensoli. For Count Sensoli is

minded to put on the habit of the Lesser Brothers and hath elected to be known as Brother Humble."

Duenna

But stop ! It is yet too late ?

Valente

'T is three days past —

"Our age is vapid, somnolent, besotted. I weary of the world and I had wandered in a wilderness till now a path appears leading to peace !"

Marchese

A path for children and the blind, perchance,
But not for men. 'T was ever thou, Valente,
I loved best, honored most. What other word
Befits the man that will not beat his path
Even through the wilderness — I who admired
him

And would advance him — I must ask what other
Befits him as doth "Coward" !

Viviana

I forbid you !

Valente

'T is past endurance ! Sir, my brother's honor —

Duenna

Oh, Sirs, forbear !

Viviana

The letter !

Valente

Pray, forgive. —

“I charge thee sell our father’s lands, to which I am the heir, and give the money among the poor.”

Marchese

He robs his only kin !

Valente

He is the heir. —

“Communicate my purpose to Marchese d’Alessi; and say to her I was about to wed, that God has saved me from the wrong I would, in ignorance, have wrought her —”

Viviana

No wrong save this !

Valente

“I bid her cleanse her heart of sinful, vain desires for earthly marriage; which to perform she shall betake herself unto the convent of Saint Damian’s —”

Viviana

Oh, dreadful !

Duenna

Is’t a face

To hide beneath the veil?

Valente

Wilt hear the end? —

“Where she shall find the perfect joy. This I command her, by our love; and by thine honor and our bond of blood, I charge thee make no hindrance. I pray for thee, that God will turn thee from thy delight in worldly things. Oh, brother, would that thou might taste the joy I have found within this House.”

Marchese

The end?

Valente

Forbear!

Luigi (snatching the letter from him)

“Make no effort to dissuade me, for I deem it best that thou be denied entrance. These gray walls, this bed of rushes, are transformed into a chamber for the fairest of brides, my Lady Poverty.”

He’s welcome to his bride, the fool!

Duenna

Oh, Sirs!

Pray take your quarrel elsewhere. Leave us now.

I need to tend her as she were my child Again.

Viviana

Yes, leave me.

Marchese

Sister, dost thou think

I'd leave thee now?

Duenna

Oppose her not, my lord,

I beg. My darling, do not grieve too much.

It may be thou art spared the agony

A wife can know. Oh, I had feared for thee,

Thou Child of Joy! It is as if he died

In youth, sinless, and leaving thee for Heaven.

Wilt send me from thee?

Viviana

Go, all but Valente.

And, Madam, I do not think to grieve thee
more

With that unseemly gaiety he loved —

Duenna

Thou torturest me!

(*Marchese and Duenna retire.*)

Viviana

That word, it was not true?

Valente

A cursed lie!

Viviana

So help me to believe!

(The clock of a neighboring church strikes six.)

The hour is Sext. The Brothers are at prayer.

Valente

Your face shall come across his prayer.

Viviana

Perchance.

A little while the poppies shall look red
As lips; the wind crisping the grass shall sound
Like silken skirts, and then — he will forget.
Deny me not, I know. I've watched that face
Grow pensive even whilst he vowed, "I love
thee!"

My sigh, a touch, and the wavering flame leaped
forth

All glorious. And I have been content.
Yonder he's praying God to cleanse my heart
"Of sinful, vain desires." An hour ago
Here in this garden a young peasant maid
Sang me her lover's song, sweet as the call
Of birds. But she was sinful! Hark to the
blackcap

Calling his mate! How high and wild and
sweet!

O sinful world of God!

Valente

God's wounds ! Ah, Tristan,
Was it worth the piteous cost to save your soul ?
If so one climbs to Heaven, I'll writhe in Hell.

Viviana

"As if he died in youth, sinless !" Why, then,
Are broken vows no sin ? Forgive me, dearest,
I know your heart is rent, praying for me,
And I must pray for you, or else in Heaven
Your virtue be counted evil. "I command her
"By our dear love —" So, then, I must obey.

Valente

What will you do ?

Viviana

Why, I will go my way
Unto the Convent of Saint Damian's —

Valente

By Heaven —

Viviana

Farewell, my Joy in Quietude.
My roses, yield your sweets : I'll treasure them
In my heart forever. The place is dark and cold
Whither I'm going, dark and cold. But there
I shall be nearer him. And all the world's
Grown dark and cold. 'T is thou who art my
sun !

Valente

Look at me, lady. Nay? I say you shall.

Viviana

I did not know your eyes were so like his!

Valente

Curse him! Look close. Does the flame waver?

Viviana

Forbear!

Valente

Nay, you shall hear me now. I'll give to thee
Roses, free air, thy thoughts shall soar like birds,
And homing find a nest in my heart. The
cloister

Would be your prison cell, a tomb!

Viviana

Free air

And roving thoughts?

Valente

And gems and silken robes!

Viviana

Oh, shame! You think me a wilful girl that
weeps

For stolen trinkets?

Valente

Sweet, mistake me not.

I could not let that rough, ugly robe

Touch you. I know you tender women : you
 Would wear your martyrdom like a crown till
 the thorns

Sting you to death. Oh, let me be thy ser-
 vant.

My love is humble. God ! I did not come
 To speak such words ! When first I read his
 letter

I marvelled how a man could be so noble.
 And then I thought of thee ! My brain whirled,
 And now but this is clear, — I curse his name
 Who wrought thee woe ! — I love thee !

Viviana

I forbid !

Valente

I rode to the House of Portiuncula.
 They told me he was sleeping ; and at prayer
 When I knocked again. I would have burst the
 door

Had not one Brother spoke so graciously.
 I rode away ashamed. His holy look
 Softened me till I saw thy stricken face.

Viviana

I charge you, help me to perform his will.

Valente

Are you a marble saint or breathing flesh,

My beauty? How long before you loathe your
prison?

He never loved you!

Viviana

Once before you clamped
My hand like this; but at the shout of soldiers
Forgot your courtesy, my Captain!

Valente

Then

You choose a coward?

Viviana

Hush, you make me scorn
Myself and you. I should be proud, proud,
'T was leaving me for Heaven.

Francesco (appearing at the gate)

The Lord give you

His peace!

Viviana

Ah, peace! You speak that word who
wrought

Me agony? Tell him I will obey,
I'll pray I may forgive him — say his jewel
Hath burned to ashes!

Innocenza (to Felice as she runs to open the gate)

Look, the Little Poor Man!

Here's my Felice. He's an honest lover

Who gives me golden earrings. Bless us now,
Dear Father !

*(She kneels before him, dragging Felice down
beside her.)*

Viviana

Bid them cleanse their sinful hearts
Of love !

Valente

Oh, hush ! You mock a holy man !

Francesco

Thou here, my little Sister ? Be good children,
And love your Lord !

*(He blesses them and dismisses them, ad-
vancing down the terrace steps.)*

I come to bring good tidings
Of great joy, even I, Poor Little One
Of Lord Jesu Christ. I come to bid
Thee welcome to our life of poverty.
O perfect joy ! O bliss ineffable !
Above all graces and all gifts that He
Vouchsafes to His belovèd, is the pearl
Most precious, sacred, and most lovable,
'Tis holy poverty ! 'Tis this that hung
With Christ upon the Cross, with Christ was
buried,
With Christ it rose again, with Christ ascended

To Heaven. Therefore let us pray to Him
To make us worthy to become true lovers
Of sacred Poverty!

Viviana (awed)

Does his face shine

Like yours?

Francesco

He yearns that thou too mayest know
The perfect joy!

Viviana

My joy was perfect. Then
His face would shine like yours?

Valente

Now I have lost you!

*(He kneels before her, bowing his head upon
the hilt of his sword.)*

And I have stained my name with slandering
My brother. Only my sword is honest. Bless
The wielding of it! When thou art shriven and
veiled,

Bespeak me oft to God, for I am sinful!

Viviana (wavering)

I might have girded it upon thy side!

(To Francesco) Take me away from him!

*(Francesco throws his arm protectingly about
Viviana.)*

Valente (sadly, quietly)

I cannot harm thee!

(*Francesco places his hand upon the hilt of
Valente's sword, blessing it.*)

Francesco

Lord Jesu Christ, bless thy child,
Make his heart pure and mild ;
Grant him grace coming and staying,
Waking and sleeping, living and dying.
Amen.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I.

SCENE: *A cross-roads in the fields near Assisi. The roads cross the stage diametrically, the one leading to the rear winds through a little copse on rising ground. In the foreground, right, a great rock, from beneath which bubbles a spring. Enter, right, BROTHER HUMBLE. Shading his eyes with his hand, he gazes long up the winding road. At length he seats himself on the rock.*

Humble

'TIS proved how Brother Ass can ease the
burden

For Brother Soul. The more I am a-wearied,
The more content. Bare feet and rough attire
Prove potent medicine for world-weariness.
Here cometh one, whose garb, although 'tis
motley,
Denotes our kinship.

*(Enter, right, Giacomo, in a tattered livery.
Humble opens his wallet and takes out food.)*

Brother, wilt thou dine

With me?

Giacomo (eagerly)

For two good reasons, Father : first,
I am famished ! second, you owe me something,
you

Of the brown-clad friars. For once I had a
home

And master, but my master chose to change
His velvet for your garb. So I was driven
Into the world with only a piece of gold !
Next day the gold was gambled at the fair !
My wife grows thin and ugly and the babies
Are always crying — Once I had a roof —

*(He looks closely into Humble's face, then
throws the bread into the ditch.)*

Master, the bread I fed your hounds was sweeter !
(He goes out.)

Humble (calmly)

This robe is mail against ingratitude's
Fierce shafts that can no longer reach my heart.
*(In the distance some one is singing. In the
pauses of the song, the nightingale sings
as if in answer.)*

The Voice

O Love, Love, who thus hast wounded me,
I can proclaim no other name than Love.
O Love, Love, let me be joined to thee,
I shall embrace none other dear as Love!

Humble

He cometh, heavenly poet 'mid our age
Of vicious prose. I think the very leaves
Lean lovingly to him, the flowers yearn
To be plucked. Hark, now, the nightingale
would sing
As sweet! He counts the universe his kin.

Francesco (singing)

O Love, Love, thou so entrancest me,
My heart is always quivering with love.
I am quivering for thee,
Love, but to be with thee!
O Love, for courtesy,
Make me to die of love!

(*Humble hastens to greet Francesco as he
appears in the leafy path, centre.*)

Francesco

Why wert thou silent, Brother? I had harked
Along the way for thy response.

Humble

I have

No skill in singing.

Francesco

Little Sister Bird

Sang antiphon to me. A thankful heart
 Makes sweetest melody. Our tongues should
 have

No use but to exalt the Lord. My rule
 Enjoins that ye go singing on your way.
 I name my children Carollers of God.

Humble

Once I delighted me with deathless words
 Of singers long since dust. But now I walk
 Familiar with a poet that transmutes
 Our homely tongue to music.

Francesco

I command,

Call it not poesie, my praise of God!
 It sings untutored on my lips. O Thou
 Most sweet, my God! My spouse! Delight of
 my soul!

Humble

Thou art fain to sing the world to righteousness.

Francesco

My voice is weak, but I must lift it up
 So long as I have breath. What of thy quest?
 This first endeavor I have laid on thee?

Humble

This food, a prayer or two for benediction,

Gibes from a knave that knew me 'neath my
cowl,
And peace within.

Francesco

Take heed to preach the Word
Acceptably, nor whatever dwells within,
Be it peace or storm.

Humble

It was tranquillity
I sought in putting on this garb.

Francesco

Nay, then,
Thou erred. Thou canst not buy the peace of
God
With cord and cassock. Furthermore, His
peace
Is something sweet and fiery that thrills
The heart a-quivering.

(He lays the food on the rock.)

We are unworthy
Of such great treasure.

Humble

Pray, how canst thou speak
Of treasure where there is such poverty?
I've chosen poverty, I'll bear the sting
Of toil and hunger willingly—

Francesco

My son,
I do not shun the sting, I count it bliss.

Humble

For there shall be reward? What if we lack
For cloth and knife and porringer and board
And home and servants? It shall be accounted
For virtue verily.

Francesco

I had no thought
Of gaining a reward. I was reminded
Of God's sweet courtesy. He that vouchsafes
To send His rain alike upon the just
And the unjust, hath fashioned this broad stone
To be our table, and hath given a spring
Of crystal water that the thirsty pilgrim
May be refreshed. Therefore I count it treasure,
For our inn was not prepared by human hands.

Humble

Oh, keep me with thee always; I would drink
Of the fount that leaps within thy heart.

Francesco

No more
Of thee or me, but eat and pray, then onward.
(*Praying*) Sweet Jesu, thou hast fed us like the
ravens.

In Thee is all our trust. Amen.

(They eat sparingly.)

Behold

The covetous ants are seeking for their portion.

But they shall be denied ; they have forgot

The words of Jesu Christ, since they take
thought

For the morrow. Therefore let us feed the
birds,

Who best obey Him.

*(He scatters some crumbs on the ground. One
bird darts down and seizes a crumb, then
another and another until a flock is hover-
ing over the rock.)*

Francesco (advancing, finger on lip)

Behold, the Little Religious,

The hooded lark !

*(He fills his hands with crumbs. The birds
alight on him and peck the crumbs. He
begins to preach to them softly.)*

My sisters of the air,

Much bounden are ye unto God your Maker,

For He hath given you the power to fly

Where'er ye will. — See how they ruffle their
wings !

They understand my words. — He hath pre-
served

Your seed in the ancient ark of Noah, lest
Your happy race be lost. The boundless air
He appointeth for your home. And more than
this,

Ye sow not, neither do ye reap, for God
Will feed you ; streams and fountains hath He
given

To be your drink. The mountains and the
vales

Are for your refuge with their mighty trees
Whereon to make your nests. And since ye
lack

The skill to spin and sew, God clotheth you
In shining feathers, double and triple raiment.
Therefore, my little sisters, since your God
Hath shown such love for you, avoid the sin
Of ingratitude and study ever more
To sing praises unto God.

(He makes over them the sign of the Cross.

They soar aloft, singing joyously.)

Behold, they fly

To the four parts of the heavens. Even so
My Brethren shall preach the Cross of Christ
Throughout the world ; even so my sons,
Possessing nothing of their own, commit
Their lives unto the providence of God.

Humble

I would
Our Little Brother could have heard thy sermon !

Francesco

My little child ! The first to trust in me,
Leaving his toys for prayer. He will believe
When all else falter.

Humble

None can ever leave thee,
Our Little Father !

Francesco

Some there are who name
Me father, yet they are no kin of mine !
For whoso doeth the will of my Father which
is
In Heaven, the same is my brother and sister
and mother.

Humble

Teach me thy will that I may be thy kins-
man.

Behold what comes — a charger riderless,
With sable trapping for a warrior's death.
How many other saddles too were empty
Before that rider fell ! A score of days,
And he will be forgot, unless perchance

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His charger neigh for him. Epitome
Of the world of strife !

(Enter, left, a soldier of low rank, leading a charger.

Humble begs alms of him.)

Francesco

God save his soul !

Soldier (giving a coin to Humble)

Aye, Father,

We all need prayers. But I must think that
God

When He looked down and saw him scale the
wall

Hath thought, "This man will make a valiant
angel

"To storm the gates of Hell." So now he
serves

Under the Lord of Hosts !

(He uncovers his head.)

Francesco

A prayer to speed him,

Whilst thou, dear Brother Humble, spread our
store

And welcome our guest to our inn.

*(Francesco begins to pray. Humble offers
the soldier food. Suddenly Humble notices
the trappings of the horse.)*

Humble

Sensoli arms

Embroidered here? The loss is mine alone!

(He flings his arms across the saddle, bowing his head upon the charger's neck.)

Pietro, the soldier

You loved my Captain? Ah, I know you now!

Could I ever mistake your face for his? Mark you,

Each man hath changed his costume since that day

I climbed to your balcony. The beggar's earned A soldier's mail; the pall lies over one;

And you, wearing the garb of charity,

Would give the bread denied when I entreated In Perugia's name.

(The charger whinnies mournfully.)

Come, my bonny girl.

Thou goest to feed in quiet pastures where

This archèd leg shall stiffen and thy mane

Bristle with burrs. And when upon thy face

The black hairs whiten and the film of blue

Shall cloud thy sight, even then at times thy nostrils

Shall foam when thou art dreaming of the battle

And thy bold master's rein. It should have been
For both one last wild plunge from reddest life
To death!

(He goes out, right, leading the charger.)

Francesco

Praised be my Lord for Sister Death!
To righteous souls she bringeth only blessing.
These green fields, do they speak to thee of hope,
The hue of Paradise? The chant of birds,
How harsh compared with the unending praise
Of angels!

Humble

Nay, the universe is foreign,
And I am homeless, without kin. Your beasts
Are not my brothers, your sisters of the air,
I heed them not!

Francesco

Hast thou not chosen me
To be thy kin? Wilt thou deny me, Brother?

Humble

Have you no other name to call me?

Francesco

Friend,
Our guest did scorn our entertainment. Where-
fore
Hath he reproached thee?

Humble

Must I heed every beggar
Whose claim must be most just?

Francesco

They said to Jesus,
“When saw we thee a-hungred and we fed
Thee not?”

Humble

I do entreat you, Father, tell me
Again how looked Valente's eyes when you
Denied him entrance?

Francesco

At the last he wept
And begged thy prayers and blessed thee.

Humble

Aye, 't is like.
My way to him was always wisest, noblest.
When we were boys he used to beg me read
The tales of martial deeds: Leonidas,
Horatius, some foolhardy knight. And both
He marvelled at alike, the storied hero
And his dear scholar. How I loved to watch
His crimson deepen! Now his face gleams white
In death!

Francesco

God chose him for His warrior!

Humble (bitterly)

So on men's lips his name shall be heroic;
And I am Brother Humble.

Francesco

There are deeds
As valiant God shall lay on thee; our task
Is now to learn His bidding. I command
That thou by holy obedience turn round
And round in the road and never cease to
turn
Until I speak.

Humble (puzzled)

What is your will?

Francesco

Obey!

Humble (sullenly)

Aye, prove me as thou wilt!

*(Francesco kneels in the road and begins to
pray. Humble turns round so many times
that he becomes dizzy and falls; but rises
and continues his task.)*

Francesco (with closed eyes)

Brother, stand still.

Which way art thou facing now?

Humble (shortly)

It is the north.

Francesco

That is the way that God would have thee go.
(*Opening his eyes.*) And I face southwards. By
our dear Lord's grace,

It is the road that leadeth to Saint Damian's.
Beneath that olive shade mine eyes, grown dim
From weeping o'er my sins, shall be restored ;
There shall my spirit quicken through the serv-
ice

Of holy Clare. Come hither to me when thou
Shalt have performed thy mission.

Humble

What's your will?

Francesco

Yon lies Perugia. Preach in the market-place
The sweetness of repentance and the love
Of God.

Humble

Thou knowest not my people ; they
Are vapid, volatile, ignoble ; deaf
To heavenly poesie !

Francesco

Hast thou never loved
Thy neighbor, then how shalt thou love thy
God?
My son refuses?

Humble

Let me counsel thee.

Francesco

Is not the Lord our Counsellor, who shewed
The way? I speak with His authority,
Who am the vilest of all sinners; thus
Mankind may know all virtue and all power
Proceed from God and not from any creature.
O Brother Humble, Brother Humble, yield
To God!

*(Humble turns without speaking, taking
the road up the hill, rear.)*

And on thy way lift up thy voice
In antiphon of praise, that I may know
My son remembereth his Father's will.

(Singing.) Now He hath conquered me

All enmity shall cease;

And love in verity

Attend upon our peace.

Humble (bidden by the trees; with faltering voice)

'Tis Christ enamours me,

I am mighty through His grace!

My heart shall faithful be

To Christ who comforts me.

My heart's aflame with love!

*(When the voice has ceased, Francesco
sinks down upon the rock; spent, lonely.)*

Francesco

Francesco, thou art homeless, without kin !
 My kindred of the earth and air, I pray,
 Be very kind to me ! Good Messer Sun,
 Veil me thy rays a little, lest thy glory
 Shall blind me ! *(Bathing his eyes.)*

Pure and gentle Sister Water,
 Thy touch is like my mother's hand ; and I
 Am homeless, without kin ! But once I found
 A consolation in the chill embrace of snow.

*(He breaks flowering branches from a tree
 and makes of them three mounds ; one long
 and a little one on either side. He kneels
 beside them.)*

I am not alone. Here lies my wife,
 And here my little children.

(He caresses them, kissing the blossoms.)

What's to do,
 My darlings ? I who lack for time to serve
 The Lord, how shall I care for you ? Call
 me

No more, no more, my own most dear ! The
 Lord

Hath need of me ! Call me no more, no more !
*(He rises from his knees and goes out, right,
 singing joyously.)*

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My heart shall faithful be
To Christ who comforts me!
My heart's aflame with love!
My heart's aflame with love!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 2.

SCENE: *The garden at Saint Damian's. Dawn. In the rear and across the sides, the cloister. In the foreground, right, a little hut of willow boughs. At rear, left, a wide gate opening upon the road. The Poor Ladies may be heard chanting the "Praise of the Creatures."* FRANCESCO *appears at the door of the hut, groping his way. He listens ecstatically to his hymn.*

The Poor Ladies (singing)

MOST high, all-powerful, benignant Lord,
To Thee all praise and honor we accord!
Thine be all blessing, Thine all laud and fame.
No man is worthy to pronounce Thy name!

Praised be my Lord for all that Thou hast
done:

For all Thy creatures, specially Messer Sun,
Our Brother, who bestows the light of day.

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How beautiful and splendid is his ray,
Whereby Thy majesty he must display !

Praised be my Lord for Sisters Moon and Star,
So clear and lovely set in Heaven afar !

Praised be my Lord for Brother Wind ; for air
And clouds ; as well for stormy weather as fair ;
Since all Thy creatures rest beneath Thy care.

Praised be my Lord for Sister Water ; lowly
Yet precious, useful, and exceedingly holy.

Praised be my Lord for Brother Fire, our light
That can illumine the darkness of the night ;
Robust and jocund is he, strong and bright.

Praised be my Lord likewise for Mother Earth,
Who hath been nurse and guardian from our
 birth ;
Of grass and flower and fruit she knows no
 dearth.

Praised be my Lord for all who grant forgive-
 ness
For love of Thee ; or bear distress and weakness

In peace. O blessed folk, in verity,
For Thou shalt crown them for eternity.

Praised be my Lord for Sister Death-of-the-
Body,
From whom no living man escapeth, truly.
Ah, woe to them that mock Thy holy will !
But blessed are they that all Thy laws fulfil ;
To them the second death can work no ill.

Praise ye and bless the Lord, and thankfully
Serve Him forever with humility.

Amen.

(*Clare enters from the cloister, rear. She
bustens to Francesco, supporting him to a
bench.*)

Francesco

Ah, Clare, 't is thou ?

Clare

Who else, my blessed Father ?
None else shall tend thee in these hours of pain.
Hast thou enjoyed the little house I made ?
Thy look declares thou art refreshed by sleep.
What of the night ?

Francesco

I could not sleep for pain.

Clare

Alas !

Francesco

And yet my soul hath been refreshed
By greater gift than sleep.

Clare

What means thy look ?
Thou art transfigured !

Francesco

I have heard God's voice !

Clare

O holy saint !

Francesco (turning from her and speaking coldly)

What is the hour ?

Clare

'T is Prime.

Thou needst refreshment now.

Francesco (absently)

I need no food.

I am satisfied.

Clare

This suffering wasteth thee,
And I must tend thee. Could I bear the pain
Thou shouldst not suffer it.

Francesco

My tender Clare !

I should have failed and fallen from our faith
Without thee. Take my blessing now, lest never
I rest again beneath this shade —

Clare

No more !

This cannot be the end !

Francesco

Sister, I know

That we shall meet in Paradise.

Clare (humbly but ecstatically)

Amen !

Francesco (whispering with a look of awe)

It was revealed to me. Ah, Clare, Clare,
Thou kneel to me ? Once more my little maid
Fleeing to me at night ? The jewelled hair
Shorn at the altar, all those shimmering robes
Put off for these sad garments ! Do they lie
About thee softly ?

Clare

Tenderer than velvet.

*(The bell at the gate rings. Through the bars
may be seen two brown-clad figures.)*

A message from the Portiuncula.

Francesco

God send good tidings from a little son
Concerning whom my heart is heavy laden ;

I fear me lest the Devil, like a wolf,
Shall seize my lamb!

Clare

But thou, the watchful shepherd,
Can save thy flock.

(She admits Brothers Juniper and Humble.

Juniper bows low before her without looking into her face. Humble looks at her curiously. Clare receives their salutations humbly, with averted look.)

Juniper

The Lord give thee His peace,
Most holy Sister Clare.

Clare

God save you both,
But name me not as holy who am but
A poor vile woman.

Humble (aside)

The garb of poverty
Mars not the loveliness of high-born beauty.
This austere loveliness makes ruddier cheeks
Look blowzy.

Juniper

Brother Humble greeteth thee,
Who recently hath come to dwell with us,
Leaving a high estate for lowliness.

Humble

The very winds are gentle here ; the flowers
Bloom frailest, loveliest ; the only birds
Soft murmuring doves. Within is quietude,
Save for the chant of prayer and praise of hymn.
Here faces wear the pallid loveliness
Of Heaven.

Clare (coldly)

Since here are human hearts, here too
Are sin and suffering. This is a house
Of penitence and labor.

*(She points to a Sister who goes and comes in
the far corner of the garden, laboriously
filling jars of water at the well.)*

God befriend her !

Her mind 's well-nigh distraught. A hidden sin,
I fear, blacker than penances reveal.
Yet she confesses fault enough, desires
Of the flesh, pride, wilful disobedience.

Humble

I 've marked the Religious at his penances,
As ardent as a lover. What is here
But frailty and languor and a mind
Distraught ?

Clare

I must increase the penances,
Lest she should die unshriven.

Juniper

Sister Clare,

We are all sinners, I, the worst of men.
The Devil spreads his toils for Brother Humble;
Wherefore against his will I came with him.

Clare (looking full at Humble)

He is expected.

Juniper

We have been delayed.

For on our way we met some stranger folk
Who, when they saw our garb, saluted us
Most reverently and would have kneeled to us.
But the Poor Brethren rather would be scorned
And mocked even as their Master was. So I,
To make them scorn me, mounted on a log
With children playing see-saw; till at length
They turned and left us, saying, "He's a fool!"
Whereby I was more pleased than by their
awe

And reverence.

Clare

Oh, Brother Juniper,
Thou plaything of Jesus Christ!

Humble

Then it is holy

To play the fool!

Juniper

Revile me all thou wilt,
But guard thy tongue from speaking blasphemy!
Sweet Brother Humble, I would succor thee;
I can advise thee how to keep thy tongue
From speaking evil. I myself have kept
For six months silence in this manner: first,
For love of God in Heaven; the second day,
For love of Jesu Christ, His Son; the third,
For love of the Holy Spirit; on the fourth,
For reverence to the Holy Virgin Mary;
And thus each day, for love of some sweet saint,
I kept the six months' silence. Likewise thou—

Humble

For all the saints in Heaven, be silent now!

Clare

Thy Father yearneth for thy coming. Go
Confess thyself to him. And he is blind
And suffering. Canst thou bring comfort?

Humble

Blind,
Those luminous eyes? (*Aside.*) But they shall
read my soul!

(*Clare beckons Juniper into the chapel. As
they pass the Sister at the well, Juniper
addresses her gently.*)

Juniper

The Lord give thee His peace, dear Sister.

Dolorosa (startled, tremulous, then reassured by his face)

Peace !

Here is no lack of peace ! Rather a surfeit !
 Could you not die of peace ? Listen ! No sound
 But placid, passionless content of doves.
 No vivid hue, only the fragile beauty
 Of flowers that languish in the cloister shade.

Humble (transfixed by her voice)

Blighted and torn ! As if it could be nature
 The poppy should take on the lily's hue.

Dolorosa

The silence deafens, or a mockery
 Of voices call to me ! I pray and beat
 Mine ears, yet ever the luring voices shrill
 Above the sacred peace. The strum of lutes,
 The flutter of fans, and spurs ringing ! The
 laugh

Of children here in a house of barren women !
 Yet Sister Clare's content, and you look happy.
 Something exalts your face — something, some-
 thing —

Juniper (pityingly)

'T is only a poor cobbler, my lady.

Clare

He

Remembereth our Lord's command, "Whoso
"Will come after me, let him deny himself."

Dolorosa

Then I should be most happy. Have I not
Denied myself? Put off a wedding robe
For this sad garb? Aye, sadder than the hue
That honors death! I might be crowned with
grief,

Touched by the glory of the heroic dead.
This is the hue of life that ne'er was quick,
Of death-in-life!

Humble (aside)

Wouldst make me hate the dead?

Dolorosa

But when I lived carelessly, I was good,
For then I loved to pray. But now my prayers
Find no acceptance in God's sight.

Clare

Pray on.

When thou art worthy, thou shalt find an answer.

*(Meanwhile Humble has filled the jar and
is about to bear it to the cloister; but
Clare forbids by a gesture. She enters,
followed by Juniper.)*

Dolorosa (dully)

Obedience is best.

(She goes to the gate and opens it.)

I know the secret

Of the lock. The gate is open wide. Where
should

I go? That garden where the flowers bloom

The gayest — there a haunting memory

Brings faintness like the wind o'er lily fields.

Where should I hide me with my shaven head

And ragged gown? It is my appointed labor.

*(She takes the jar from Humble and lifts
it, staggering, to her shoulder. She enters
the cloister.)*

I thank you, Sir. Obedience is best.

Humble

O beautiful white vision, like a star,

Flooding the wide earth for a gleaming moment,

Whereby I saw the world, and it is good!

That lost, quick-pulsing world, wherein I moved

A shadow 'mid the quick!

*(Francesco has risen from his bench and
gropes his way to Humble.)*

Francesco

Who is it near me?

My little sheep of God?

Humble (without turning)

I have obeyed thee.

Francesco

What of the harvest?

Humble

Barren.

Francesco

Then thou art

A thriftless husbandman.

Humble

The soil is worthless.

Francesco

Only untilled. The seed of God's dear word
Will sprout in barren places if the sower
Be diligent. What said thou unto them,
And they to thee?

Humble

Ah, there was scorn and insult
To satisfy the lowliest of the Brothers.
Even the zany cobbler would be content.
"My Lord in rags?" bawled out a dirty fellow;
"Now he'll rub elbows with us common folk!"
And jostled me down into the gutter.
"Is she still fair, your Lady Poverty?"
Who spoke those words was to have called me
brother.

Then one opposed, "The garb he wears is holy!"
 Another, "Shame! Would lovers of Perusia
 "Mock at the kinsman of her martyred hero?"
 I know not who spoke thus, but all the throng
 Took up the words, unbonneted, and thus
 They let me pass from out the market-place,
 Where trophies and funereal trappings hung,
 And eyes filmed swiftly at my brother's name.
 O Heaven, the bitterness!

Francesco

So, Brother Faintheart,
 Hear my commandment. Go thou once again
 Unto thy people. Say to them, "Give ear
 "To my confession and forgive, for I
 "Shall only be absolved by you. My life
 "Was like an empty cup to fevered lips,
 "A stone to the starving. Therefore God denies
 "The sanctuary I seek." My little son,
 What other words are true?

(*Humble makes no reply. His face is sullen.*)

Then shalt thou say,
 "Now am I come to ask some service mean
 "Enough to prove my penitence —"

(*Francesco hesitates, pondering. Suddenly
 they hear without the tinkle of a bell, as
 if moving.*)

A sign

From Heaven ! Dost hear the leper's warning
bell

That speaks for him, "Beware, I am unclean!"
Hearest thou not the cry his heart would utter,
"Outcast, alone!" God hath appointed thee
To be their guardian.

Humble (agbust)

The leprosy!

Francesco

Thou hearest my command. Thou shalt obey,
Answer me by the merit of holy obedience.

(He waits wistfully for an answer. Receiving none, he turns toward the chapel. On the way he hesitates.)

But sinners are brought back to God rather
By gentleness than wrath. — My little son!

(Enter Sister Dolorosa carrying a bowl of milk. She persuades him to return to the bench.)

Dolorosa

I have been bid to offer you this food.

Francesco

Is this the voice I heard beside the well?

Dolorosa

Aye, Father.

Francesco

I have heard that voice before
In another garden —

Dolorosa

— Where the flowers were gay
And peasant children sang of love and I
Was the Child of Joy!

Humble (within the hut of willow)

My Child of Joy!

Dolorosa

But here

The Sisters name me Sister Dolorosa.

Francesco (listening)

We are alone? Then silently and soon
The vow of holy obedience has been kept. —
Thou shalt be Child of Blessedness, my Sister.

*Dolorosa (singing softly as she twines a wreath
of white roses)*

There's nothing that can compare!

Silk o' the corn, 't is rougher

Than Some One's golden hair!

(She flings down the flowers.)

A curious song to offer at the Hours;
It mingles with the prayer, discordant strives
To outshrill canticle. Do you remember

The last dear glimpse of earth ere you were blind?
Does it not burn before your eyes?

Francesco

The darkness

Was gathering slowly—

Dolorosa (looking up at the lowering sky)

Like the sky above.

What if a hand was smote across your eyes,
A blow for a caress! or if your ears
Were deafened suddenly, would not the last
Dear sound re-echo evermore?

Francesco

My Sister,

The voice of God shall speak to thee above
The mockery of earthly sounds. This night
Within my little cell I heard God's voice.

Wouldst listen for that sweet mysterious mes-
sage?

Dolorosa

Nor prayers nor penances unstop mine ears
To hear your mysteries.

Francesco

Wilt thou not eat

For me? I need no food.

Dolorosa (taking the cup from him)

Yes, I am hungry. (*She puts it down.*)

And yet I cannot eat.

Francesco

But daintiness

And piety cannot agree.

Dolorosa

When I

Was better fed, I prayed the more.

Francesco

This robe

Discomforts thee?

Dolorosa

Ah, shivering where my jewel

Was wont to glow!

Humble (aside)

How lightly slipped my gem

Into the soot!

Dolorosa

'T is curious how gems

And hearts are different. For always the fire
Will glow within the jewel.

Francesco

Wilt thou listen

Unto God's word?

Dolorosa

Yes, I will listen, only

I shall not understand, for I was born
Of flesh, and you do claim to be a kinsman

To sunshine and the cloud, fire and the wind,
Starlight and water. Even the very earth
You tread is dear to you. My love was little,
Encompassed all in one.

Francesco

Where is thy hand?
I charge thee, listen. In the night I cried
To God, "Give grace to me, Thy lamb, that
through

"No weakness of the flesh I fall from thee!"
For I was crazed with fever in mine eyes.
Straightway there came an awful voice from
Heaven:

"Francesco, answer me, thy Lord. Were all
"The earth of gold; were all the rivers, founts,
"And seas of balm; were all the mountains,
hills,

"And rocks of precious stones; and it were true
"That thou hadst found a treasure dearer far
"As gold is far more precious than earth, and
balm

"Than water, likewise precious stones than
rocks

"And hills; then if that far more precious treas-
ure

"Were granted thee, together with this pain,

"So oughtest thou not therewith to be content
 "And very light of heart?" I marvelled so
 I scarce could answer. At length I murmured,

"Lord,

"I am unworthy of such precious treasure."
 Again the Word of God came out of Heaven;
 "Be of good cheer, Francesco, this affliction
 "Of pain and weakness is a sign to thee
 "Of what I have in store for thee, the treasure

"Beyond all treasures, the gift of life eternal."
*(He ceases, spent with ecstasy. Dolorosa has
 been intent rather upon the exaltation of
 his look than on his meaning. She speaks
 quietly, at length.)*

Dolorosa

I love to think his face must shine like yours;
 Uplift to God and rapt in ecstasy!
 Before his eyes the shining mysteries,
 And God's voice calling him from Heaven.
 Almost

Am I content.

Humble (aside)

The torture of Hell! To stand
 Transfixed before a mirror where I see
 My hideousness! 'T is but a masquerade,

My garb and title of humility.
 A mockery of God. Oh, to have worn
 My velvet with a braver grace, to die,
 So to earn laurels from my people; even
 To be dear to mine own knaves who flouted
 me!

O warrior angel, with what wounding eyes
 Thou leanest down to me! Seest thou me
 Entirely now? What need hadst thou of Heaven
 Who found earth worth the living and the
 dying!

Beats there in me one pulse akin to thine?
 I am abandoned of earth and Heaven, of all
 Save her I marred the most!

Dolorosa

Why do you weep?

That I am sinful, all-unhallowed
 By that white radiance that shines on him?
 But you are blind from weeping. Sister Clare
 Shall comfort you. Tell me before you go
 The penance for my words.

Francesco (opening the door and calling)

Art thou within,

Sister Innocenza?

Innocenza (appearing)

Little Father!

Francesco

Thou shalt have aid of Sister Dolorosa
To prune thy roses. (*He goes in.*)

Innocenza (*shyly, at her task*)

'T is the task I love

More than the praises and the prayers, almost
As dear to me as perfuming the altar.
The sheltering walls are kind to my white roses.

Dolorosa

This branch had rooted on the other side.
The topmost flower is crimson; here below
The petals pale. How long before the vine
Forgets it ever bore a crimson blossom? —
I hear another footstep in the garden.

Innocenza

We are alone. Sometimes I think the buds
That die unblown are wisest.

Dolorosa

Why?

Innocenza

The wind

Shall shatter the full blown.

Dolorosa (*turning up Innocenza's face*)

Ah, better so

Than to be shrivelled in the bud! — I heard
A sigh within the hut!

Innocenza

What I have heard
Was mirthful music coming near.

Dolorosa

Your ear
Is eager for the noises of the world
That pass your gate.

Innocenza

Nay, I do tell my beads
Aloud when wanton gaiety goes by.
Listen ! The air is strangely like the song
I 've heard thee murmur at thy penances.

(She remembers herself and begins to tell her beads.)

Chorus (approaching)

“ When'er she combs her tresses,
Veil that 's spun of foam and sun
Must fold those little shoulders
In lingering caresses ! ”

*(In a burst of sunshine the wedding party of
Innocenza and Felice go by.)*

Innocenza (the bride)

Sing softly here ! Ah, sing no more !

Felice

True heart,
Sad on thy wedding day ?

110 LOVE IN UMBRIA

*Innocenza (selecting a wreath of scarlet poppies
from her garlands)*

These are her flowers.
Shall they give balm or sorrow? She will know
My heart doth bleed for her.

(She throws the wreath over the gate.)

Felice

No clouded eyes
To-day! My song again, the song she loves!

(The bridal party passes singing.)

There's nothing that can compare.

Flower o' the broom, thou art too dull,

Bloom o' the wheat, 't is paler,

Silk o' the corn, 't is rougher

Than Some One's golden hair!

Sister Innocenza (tenderly, wondering)

Ah, Sister Dolorosa, what shall be

Our name for thee since thou hast learned to
weep? —

The garden seems to echo with her cry —

Poppies are gay. Why should they make thee
weep?

How came they here?

Dolorosa

A bride went singing by.

Innocenza

I would not hear the song!

L O V E I N U M B R I A I I I

Dolorosa (significantly)

Her name like yours
Is Innocence!— A bridal gift for me!
What can I know of bridals save the giving?

Innocenza (troubled)

Let us go in. My roses, nestle your heads
Under the leaves; the clouds are black with
storm.

*(She enters the cloister. Humble bars the
entrance to Dolorosa.)*

Humble

Heart of my heart, I'll love thee into joy
Again!

(He peers into her face and starts back.)

Dolorosa

O Mother of God! That hour has come
I thought would bring me death.

Humble

O God, for mercy
A miracle! Breathe flame to dying ashes!

Dolorosa (praying)

O God, wilt Thou refuse Thy voice to me
Alway? O Mary, woman, dost Thou hear?
Do saints forget in Heaven they loved on earth?
Teach me to answer him!

(The door of the chapel opens. Brother Juni-

per comes down the steps, passing them without noticing them. You see through the open door a narrow cell, and at the end of the corridor the lights of the altar, shining through the gathering darkness. There is a murmur of chanting.)

Juniper

O pitying God,
 Keep Brother Humble holy! Sweet my Lord,
 Keep Brother Humble holy! Even thus
 I'll pray a hundred times at every Hour,
 And thrice a hundred if I chance to wake
 At night — nay, I will lie upon the ground
 Lest I should sleep and thus the prayers be lost.
 Most gentle Lamb, keep Brother Humble holy!
*(He passes through the gate, still repeating
 his prayer. Dolorosa lets the flowers slip
 from her arms.)*

Dolorosa

O pitying God, Thou shinest on my heart,
 And my desire is open. Sweet my Lord,
 No chiding but the gift of heart's desire!
 Most gentle Lamb, keep Brother Humble holy!
(Aside.) 'T is nothing to be feared, the voice of
 God!

A little stilling of the heart, music

Of far-off harmonies, like coming sleep,
And light on everything !

(She gazes contentedly at her cell.)

Now I must know

I shall go softly evermore.

*(She turns as if remembering him suddenly,
but not poignantly.)*

I had

Forgot ; you have been near to death. You must
Be lacking food. *(She holds out the cup.)*

Humble (yielding at length)

Always from thee to me ?

(He takes the cup from her.)

Dolorosa

What heavenly visions do you see ? Your eyes
Are mystical !

Humble

I see the sacrament

Your hands hold out to me.

(Again the bell tinkles.)

Dolorosa

What do you hear ?

Humble

The altar bell !

Dolorosa

What do you wait ?

Humble

Forgiveness.

Dolorosa (withdrawing)

The Lord give thee His peace!

(She passes through the door into her cell.

The chanting grows distinct.)

The Sisters (within)

I beseech Thee, O Lord, that the sweet and fiery strength of Thy love may draw my soul from all things under Heaven, that I may die for love of Thy love even as Thou didst deign to die for love of my love. Amen. *(The door closes.)*

Humble

“He wounded me to prove

“My heart can break for love!”

(Stretching out his arms to the sky.)

Spirit of flame! My soul kindles and leaps
To prove its kinship!

*(His tone and gesture become those of
Valente.)*

I am born again

Into some shape of thee! Now may God send
A valiant, dear endeavor for the world
Two that I love found purposeful and sweet.

(Again the bell tinkles.)

LOVE IN UMBRIA 115

O God, the sign ! For me the garb of meekness,
(*exultant*) For me the storm, for me the leprosy !
Blow, winds, and smite me to the earth ! And
rain,

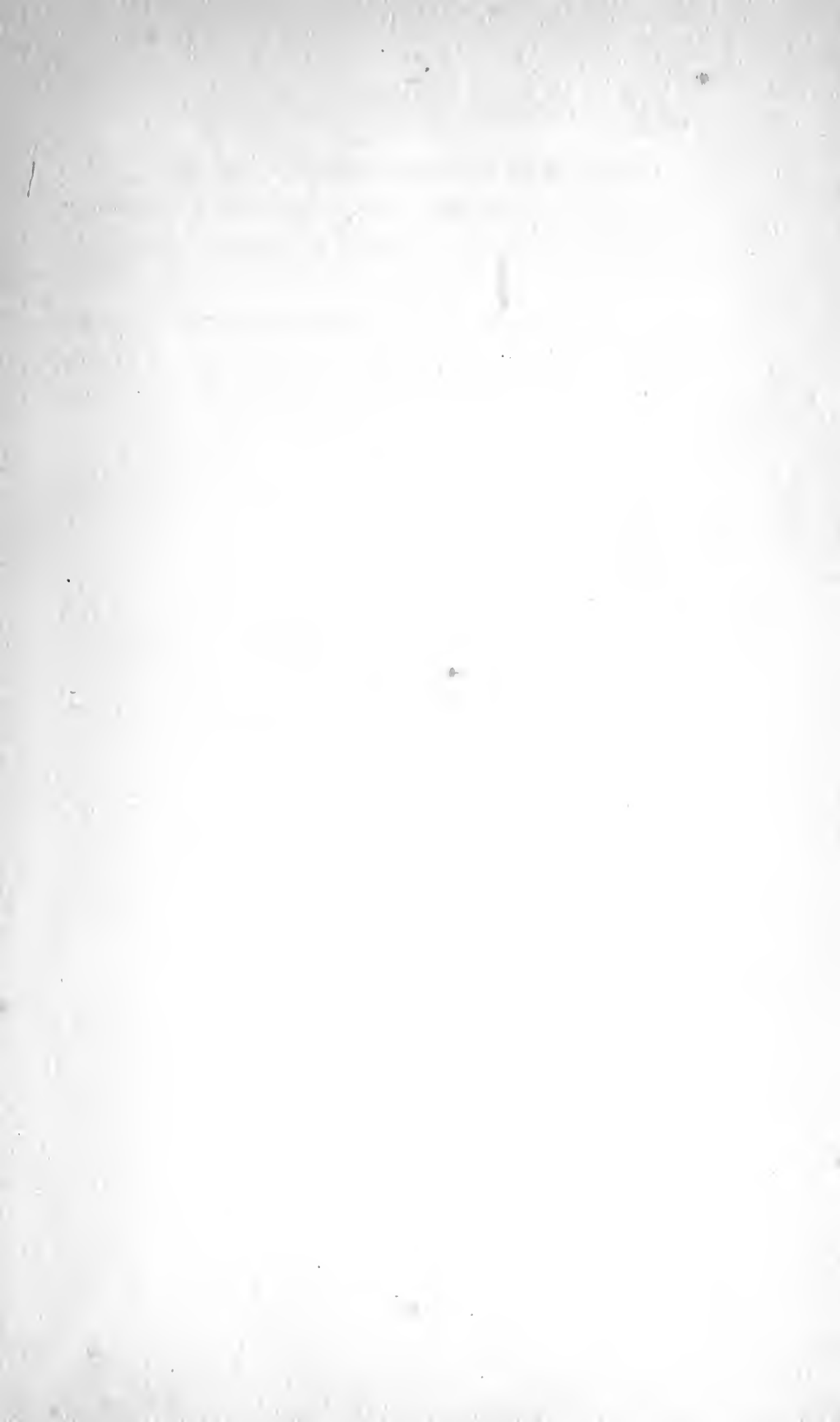
Stain me and drench my limbs into a fever !
And I will sing, for singing on the lips
Of agony is bitterer than tears !

*(The gate clangs behind him. The storm
sweeps down, blotting out the scene. But
above the storm may be heard the voice of
Brother Humble singing)*

He wounded me to prove
My heart can break for love !
My heart's aflame with love !
My heart's aflame with love !

CURTAIN





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